

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 424.

FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 13TH, 1897.

[ONE PENNY.]

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THE SNAKE-BITE.

THE midday train was hurrying onward as though, like a high-bred horse, the locomotive felt in its iron frame a fresh impulsion from the frosty air. The passengers themselves seemed inclined to enjoy the sunshiny February day, rather than to grumble at the cold. And there was one of their number that attracted a certain amount of attention from the gay exuberance of his spirits. He appeared to be literally overflowing with happiness, like a man who is nearing the fruition of a hope long cherished and long delayed, and at last on the point of realisation. He was too restless to sit still, or even to keep silent. He was a tall, lithe, sharp-featured man of about forty years of age, naturally of a fair complexion, but with his skin tanned of that peculiar mahogany-brown which betrays the parching of a tropical sun.

From that deeply bronzed visage a pair of bright blue eyes looked forth upon the world with a cheery sparkle in their depths. Of genial aspect and eager to talk, he found no difficulty in entering into conversation with his next neighbour, who was also communicative, a kindly-looking country doctor, who was returning home from a visit to town, where he had been laying in a stock of scarce drugs and had been picking up some of the latest ideas in medical science. A remark of the doctor's concerning a deep, white scar on the side of one of his travelling companion's sinewy hands furnished the latter with a pretext for talking, of which he was not slow to avail himself.

"It isn't pretty to look at," he remarked, holding up his hand as he spoke, to afford a good view of the livid-looking triangular-shaped mark, "and it was anything but pleasant in the making; for, at first, the place was cut out with a sharp knife, and then the wound was cauterised with a red-hot iron. But for all that the pain was worth enduring, for it saved my life."

"The bite of a mad dog, I suppose?" said the doctor.

"Not a bit of it. It wasn't anything one could take the chances on like that. It was a snake-bite, and the fellow that set his fangs into me was the handsomest-marked reptile you ever saw—all yellow and black, and striped like a tiger. It was out in South Africa that it happened. I had gone to the Kimberley Mines to do a stroke of business, and went off prospecting a bit on my own account. I had studied geology in my odd moments, and I had a theory as to the whereabouts of some of the big stones. So I took a trip into the interior, with a single Zulu for my guide. And one evening, while getting some sticks together for the camp fire, I was fool enough to run my hand into a tall patch of weeds; and I pulled it back fast enough, I promise you, with a tiger-snake hanging to it by his fangs."

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"And what did you do?"

"First I killed the snake. Then I cut the place out as deep as I could manage with my very sharp hunting-knife. Next I put the blade of a smaller knife that I had with me into the fire, and as soon as it got red-hot I cauterised the wound thoroughly. I was weak and sickish for two days afterwards, but it came all right at last. My Zulu Jack said it was the only time he had ever known of a person bitten by a tiger-snake to recover. I've brought home the skin and the venom from the snake's poison-bag. Jack showed me how to prepare them, and I'm going to forward them to the Zoological Society as soon as I get settled at home."

"And how did you fare in your search for diamonds?"

The traveller laughed gleefully.

"Badly enough at first," he replied. "I had just telegraphed to my poor little wife that I was dead broke and that I was coming home a good deal worse off than I went away, when a great stroke of luck—No, I'll not give you any of the details. It's a thing that might happen a second time if the person that knew about it were wise and could hold his tongue. At all events, it happened once to me; and I've come home with £20,000 to my credit, all safe and sound in the bank. So here I am, on my way to the girl I left two years ago with just enough money to keep our little house going; and I shall walk in and say:

"See here, Kate! Ruined, am I? Just put on your bonnet and we'll be off to London this blessed minute. No need to pack your trunk. Plenty of fine clothes to be bought in London. Or, if not there, we'll e'en push on as far as Paris to buy some.' And then I'll throw this little sparkler in her lap, just to prove that I'm telling the truth."

As he spoke he took from his waistcoat-pocket a large diamond, set clumsily, but not ineffectively, in a massive ring. He held it up so that the bright sunlight might show off its rainbow lustre.

"Pretty, isn't it?" he remarked, slipping the ring for better security into an inner pocket in the breast of his coat. "Kate's eyes will shine brighter than that diamond when she first gets a sight of me. For, you see, I have planned my home-coming to be a great surprise. And I've been the only friend and comforter that my sweet little wife has ever had. It's just five years since she came with a variety show to Pineyford. A poor, half-starved, sickly little thing she was, and soon broke down in the dance and song act she used to do. She felt ill—typhoid fever, nothing less—and the manager went off with his troupe and left her to die or to recover, as Providence might decide. There was just one thing to

do: I had her doctored up and fed up, when she began to get better; and I married her as soon as she was strong enough to stand up at my side and to say, 'I will!' Rather too dainty and delicate a creature for a poor man's wife, though always gay and merry and amusing. And now that we are rich—"

"Westbrook Station! Change here for Pineyford!" shouted the guard, in stentorian tones, while the train slackened speed preparatory to coming to a full stop.

"Here's my jumping-off place, I declare! Good-bye, doctor. Think I've most talked you blind, but you'll excuse a man that's just brimming over with happiness for being something over-talkative. And if you ever come to Pineyford and will ask for Joel Denton and his wife, and we happen to be at home, you'll find a hearty welcome waiting for you—that's all!"

And picking up his bag, and pulling his soft travelling cap well over his eyes, the joyous traveller swung himself down from the platform just as the train gave symptoms of moving on.

The sunshine of the winter's day had departed, and the sky showed, amid the faint rose-flush overspreading it, no luminary more dazzling than a slender-curved thread of gold, with a single planet sparkling just beyond it.

Mr. Denton was not exactly in a mood to enjoy the beauty of the evening, for, greatly to his disgust, he found that the Pineyford train—the only one that the evening hours afforded—did not depart till nine o'clock. To the gleeful anticipations of the homeward bound traveller this delay was most vexatious. However, there was no help for it; so, after comforting himself as well as he could with a good dinner, he lit a cigar, and started off for a stroll down the line, to pass away the time, and to meditate over the coming meeting with his idolised wife.

On he walked, [plunged in pleasant meditations. He had gone quite a distance, and was in the act of turning to retrace his steps to the station, when in spite of the gathering shades of twilight, he caught sight of a woman standing at the top of the embankment, opposite to the one on which he found himself. She was leaning forward and listening intently. Just then the noise of a coming train became audible. She sprang down the side of the way, and, crouching on the lines, she buried her face in her hands, and remained motionless, waiting for the death that would be so surely dealt to her by those terrible, hurrying wheels, the sound of whose coming had already swelled into approaching thunder.

Joel Denton was as quick-witted as he was athletic, and without a moment's delay he swung himself down the bank, caught the kneeling woman in his arms, and literally swept her from her perilous position into a place of safety. His aid came none too soon. As he staggered back against the bank, still grasping the rescued woman, the train rushed past with a shriek as though of fury in being balked of its prey, so close that the fiery breath of the engine fairly scorched his hands.

As the last carriage vanished round the curve, Denton released the struggling woman, and half pulled, half led her to the top of the embankment. She was very weak from the shock, and inclined to be hysterical; but Joel Denton had no sympathy with what, in his own mind, he denominated as "deuced foolishness." So when she had sunk down exhausted on the comfortless seat afforded by a big, flat stone, he looked at her severely and remarked:

"Now, what did you do that for? We might both have been killed, and if I hadn't come along at the nick of time, you surely would have been."

She looked up, showing a pale, wan countenance, set in a mass of black ruffled hair, and a pair of great, wild, dark eyes blazing with a feverish lustre.

"I wish I were! Oh, I wish I were!" she moaned, rocking herself to and fro, as if in an agony of intolerable suffering. "Why didn't you let me be? It would have been all over by this time, and now I've just got to begin again."

"And what's the reason you want so badly to kill yourself? Just tell me your story and what it is that troubles you," said Denton, his kindly heart softening before the youth and piteous words and the despairing woe of the speaker. "Mayhap I can help you to find some way out of it all."

She shook her head hopelessly.

"There is only one way out of my misery for me, and that is death."

"Anyhow, won't you tell me what is the matter?"

"Desolation!—desertion!—heartbreak!" she cried. "Look you: I had but one person to love in all the world, and that was my husband. Both my parents are dead, and I never had a child, and I loved him—no, it was more than love that I felt for him—it was idolatry! I knew he wasn't the kind of man I ought to have married. He was a gambler and a hard drinker; but he was handsome, and just as fascinating as a serpent to all women. I ran away from home to become his wife, and I do believe that the misery and disgrace of my elopement broke my poor mother's heart. I've never been happy with him, never; but just so long as I could be with him, and try to coax him back to something like what he was when we were first married, I got along, for I always hoped that some day my love and my patience would win him back to me. You may have heard of him, perhaps—the professional gambler, Martin Jackson. He is quite a celebrity in sporting circles, they say."

Joel Denton shook his head and took a furtive glance at his watch. Only a little after eight. How slowly the time lagged, when he was longing to be hurrying onward towards Kate, and the perfect bliss of their reunion.

"I might have suspected something when he decided to settle down at such a dull town as Pineyford for the winter, but I never dreamt of the real attraction of the place. It seems that there was a woman there that he had known and fancied some years before. He had tried acting for a while, and she was a member at that time of the same company with himself, and they got to be very fond of one another, I've been told. To be sure, she had married and settled down, but she wrote to him, while we were in London, to tell him that her husband had deserted her, and that she was very unhappy, and longed to see him once more.

"He came on at once to Pineyford, and we stayed there for months; and at last there came a telegram from the woman's husband saying that he was totally ruined, and that he was coming back as fast as possible. It seems that he had never deserted his wife at all, but he had gone away to try and make money, in some new enterprise or other, and when all his hopes failed he sent word that he meant to return. Why do you look at me like that? Do you think I am not telling the truth? Here are all the letters that creature wrote my husband. I found them in his room after he went away. For he and she have run off together. They would not wait until the man they had both wronged got back to face them. They have gone to London, and on Saturday they are to sail for America."

"Her name—the woman's name?"

So hoarse and broken was the whisper in which this question was uttered, that the hearer failed to comprehend it until it was once more repeated.

"She used to be known on the stage by the name of Kitty Forrest. Her husband's name is Joel Denton. And now you can understand why it was that I wanted to kill myself, for I have nothing on earth left to live for."

"You have."

"And what is that?"

"Revenge!"

She laughed dreadfully.

"And how could I avenge myself, I should like to know? I, a feeble, friendless woman. Who would help me to secure that last sweetness life has still to offer?"

"I will."

"And why? What are Martin Jackson and Kitty Forrest to you?"

"The former, nothing; the latter, all the world. I am Joel Denton!"

* * * * *

The manager and the cashier of the Hotel de Tours in Liverpool—a small tavern not far from the quay, where the steamers take their departure—were somewhat puzzled by the aspect and the movements of a man who came thither to take a room on Thursday morning. He had a wild look about his eyes, and seemed strangely absent-minded; moreover, he had no luggage, except one small bag; but as he paid in advance for three days' board and lodging, and was not too particular about the position of his room, he was accepted without question as an inmate.

As he asked for the direction of a maker of surgical instruments, he was set down as a physician, somewhat dazed with overwork, and then nobody thought any more about him. He went to the shop indicated, but his purchases were unimportant. He merely bought two small lancets, being extremely particular about the fineness of the steel and the sharpness of the blades. Having selected and paid for the little instruments, he returned to the hotel, went to his bedchamber, rang the bell, and ordered—not the inevitable whisky and water—but a jug of hot water, which, after a short delay, was brought to him by an attendant.

Then, had any spy upon his movements been peering through the keyhole, he might have witnessed a curious process. Drawing from the inner recesses of his coat a large pocket-book, the inmate of the room proceeded to take from one of its compartments a folded paper, from which he extracted a long band of scaly skin, speckled and striped with black and yellow, in hues dulled by drying, and a second very small folded paper, from which he shook upon the table two little discs of what looked like thin, semi-pellucid horn.

Then he took from the washstand a tumbler, which he turned upside down, and in the shallow hollow of its base he placed the two discs, dropping on them, with infinite precaution, a few drops of hot water. When they were nearly dissolved, he carefully anointed with the thick, viscous liquid thus produced the point and one-third of the length of the blade of each of the lancets he had just bought. After thoroughly washing the bottom of the tumbler with warm water, he calmly proceeded to smash it to pieces on the hearth, gathered up the fragments, and wrapped them in a piece of newspaper, afterwards ringing the bell, announcing the breakage, and asking that the broken glass should be taken away.

* * * * *

Two days later the steamship *Perseverance* lay at her wharf, her engines throbbing with the suppressed energy of approaching departure. There was the usual bustle and animation on the dock, as well as on the deck of the great ship. Passengers were hurrying to and fro with their wraps and handbags; porters were toiling along under weight of state-room trunks and steamer chairs; messengers were arriving with bouquets and devices in hot-house flowers, and with baskets of choice fruit, and all was pleasurable stir and excitement.

Among the latest arrivals came a pair that attracted universal attention by reason of their personal comeliness. The man, tall, broad-shouldered, black-moustached and dark-eyed, was decidedly handsome, though in a coarse, dissipated style, while his companion—a laughing, dimpled blonde, with the bluest of eyes, and the yellowest of locks, was, as a bystander audibly remarked, "as pretty as a pink." No friends or acquaintances of the striking-looking couple had come down to the wharf to see them off, but, absorbed as they were in each other, they did not seem to need or to care for the presence of anybody else.

"All aboard!" came the warning cry. There was a rush towards the gangway, and a certain degree of crowding and confusion ensued, in the midst of which the pretty blonde uttered a sudden cry.

"What's the matter?" queried her companion.

"Just look how something has scratched me!" she answered, holding up one slender, ungloved hand, across the back of which a long, deep scratch, or rather cut, formed a scarlet line.

"By Jove! You have scratched yourself. And see here! There is just such another mark on my wrist. I wonder what could have caused it! or could anyone—"

And he glared round with wrathful eyes, but, failing to fix the outrage on any person in the crowd, he contented himself with remarking: "A pin in some one's sleeve, I suppose; it's not much after all." And in a moment more the throng of departing travellers were safe and sound on board, the gangway was withdrawn, and the mighty screw bore away the huge steamship on the first stage of her voyage.

The trip was a swift and prosperous one, lasting just eight days from shore to shore. It was saddened, however, by a tragic and inexplicable incident. Two of the passengers, Martin Jackson and the charming woman who had passed as his wife, both died within a few hours of each other during the early morning of the second day out. The ship's surgeon could only conjecture the cause of the mysterious and fatal event. He suggested suicide by poison, or a peculiarly malignant type of blood-poisoning, this last supposition being warranted by the irritated and inflamed condition of a scratch on the lady's hand, and one on the wrist of her companion. But the science of the young doctor failed to discover the reason of the simultaneous development of such a condition of the blood in the veins of two different persons. However, neither of the deceased were of sufficient importance to make much fuss about.

The solemn ceremonial of a burial at sea afforded a mild, if dismal, distraction to the surviving passengers. And Joel Denton, when the cable dispatch of the *Perseverance's* arrival came with the additional tidings of the two deaths that had taken place on board, looked grimly down on the deep, white scar on the side of his hand and muttered between his teeth:

"It was worth while the danger and suffering, and all, to have brought home with me the death-dealing venom of the tiger-snake!"

L. H. H.

IN THE SMOKE OF BATTLE



CHAPTER I.

CLOSE beneath the southern border of the Pyrenees, overlooking the memorial field of a present century war, lay the Convent of St. Ursula.

It crouched like a thing decrepit with age. It reared its black towers fearfully towards the sky, as if pleading for light and help, or forgetfulness of the scenes it had witnessed.

From the time of Corunna, down past the memories of Vigo, Lugo, and Lisbon, down to the end of Vittoria, it had watched the dispatch of human life. The woe of Napoleon, the requiems after Moore, the wild, triumphant cries, as laurels showered upon Wellington, were all known to the heart of St. Ursula.

One eventide, in the heart of this eventful time, a lovely girl paced to and fro within her lonely chamber.

From her bearing one might have seen how unaccustomed she was to the confinement of those shambling walls, and how little the old quaint hangings impressed her. Essentially she was as indifferent to the cold, half mystic fascination of convent life as to the antique beauties elaborating her room.

She walked with a firm, hurried tread that bespoke impatience; yet about it there was a hesitation proclaiming something of womanly indecision, and a consideration for those her restlessness might disturb. One or twice she faltered in her passage, stopping to draw from her vest the photograph of a man.

Judging by appearances, she could not yet have

attained womanhood; although her sober mien and the conditions of her life told of years deeper and longer than the disportations of time.

Again and again she regarded the little picture. Upon each such occasion she would turn more swiftly and pace to and fro with ever-growing impatience; and as once she turned again, the door of her chamber opened, admitting one of her holy sisters.

The girl did not at first perceive the intrusion, but shortly afterwards she became suddenly aware that someone was looking across her shoulder straight at the portrait she held in her hand.

Turning sharply, and recognising her visitor, she ejaculated:

"Retta!"

This was said in quick, hasty tones, admitting no doubt of her great vexation.

"Ah, my sweet child!" the other returned gently. "Don't speak so hastily to me. Do I not love you—are we not sisters? Lalage, tell me you love me, that you want me, that I may sit by your side and talk!"

"Yes, yes," the girl hurried to reply. "I want you, I love you, but there are times —"

She stopped, and as she bowed her head her long black hair drooped over her face, concealing the look of angry impatience in her eyes. Her foot beat noiselessly on the floor with significant jerks.

Retta spoke again.

"There ought to be no times, sister Lalage, when I should be excluded from your presence. You would not be happy here unless I were with you. You have no other to love you, dear, but me."

Lalage bent her head still lower, half in shame, half in anger, endeavouring at the same time to conceal the miniature she held.

Retta continued:

"We have been friends and sisters—think of that! Ah, you turn from me hastily again. Lalage! Lalage! Look at me—look and listen!"

"Throughout our lives we have been fondly drawn together—you the child and I the woman. Hitherto we have lived in peace, loving one another very, very deeply, but now—now when I am hourly expecting the news of his terrible sentence being fulfilled, in this time of perfect pain, you turn from me and are cold. Oh, child,

you don't know the agony, the barrenness of wasted years—when love is plucked from the life, like the scent from a rose. You don't know how hard it is to live—how hard to avoid self-destruction; and were it not for you—*you*, my darling sister—my Lalage, my life would long since have flown. Think of it, Lalage, and love me!"

Her golden hair escaping the coil, here fell upon the black tresses of the wayward girl, and the two commingling might easily have suggested the contrast in their respective natures: Gold amongst dust—sunshine amongst darkness—life amongst death.

"Retta!" exclaimed the girl, suddenly raising her head, and stroking the other's hand almost fiercely, "am I unkind to you—*very* unkind? Tell me that, Retta?"

"No, darling—not unkind, but sometimes inconsiderate. You are young—very young, and consequently a little wayward; that is all."

"But you forgive that, don't you, Retta? I am a child to you, am I not?"

"Yes, Lalage!" said the other earnestly.

"You spoil me," continued the girl. "You indulge me, there is nothing you have not done, or would not do for me, is there, Retta?"

"Nothing, my Lalage, for you are all I have to live for now."

"Supposing," the girl continued, with a strange heat glowing about her face, "supposing your Victor—your own true Victor—was pardoned, and became a free man again. Supposing he sought and found you in your retreat here, where you are mourning his loss. Would you leave me alone here and return to him? Do you love him so much and me little enough for that, Retta? Would you do that?"

Retta hesitated. A world hung at her heart upon this issue, and it was in scarcely audible tones she replied:

"No! I must remember my vow."

Lalage sprang up, and, in her excitement, let the photograph fall unheeded to the floor.

At this moment Retta's eyes, wandering from her companion, chanced upon the photograph at her feet.

She stooped and secured it.

A short, sharp exclamation of surprise escaped her as she turned the face uppermost.

"What, Lalage, what is this?" she asked at length.

The girl sprang towards her, wresting the photograph from her grasp.

In so doing the picture was damaged, seeing which Lalage laughed hysterically, almost madly.

"This!" she cried, holding the picture above her. "This is the portrait of *your* Victor—*yours!* I was keeping it for the time when you regretted your vow, so that you might have one little token of your discarded love, one little token to console you. I will keep it still!"

"What made you do it!" Retta breathlessly inquired. Then, as if struck with a sudden fear:

"Lalage—Lalage—Lalage! Surely you cannot mean—you dare not mean."

"I mean nothing! I dare everything for—for your sake, Retta."

Saying this, the girl fell suddenly calm, and, after a short struggle, Retta decided she must have been mistaken in her fearful conjecture.

"I thought you could not have meant anything, Lalage," she said, with a low, nervous flutter in her voice.

"No, no, Retta," returned the girl. "I mean nothing."

only that I love you, and would do anything for you. You should not suspect me."

Then after a pause :

"Retta, you are beautiful. You are beautiful in your soul, beautiful in your body, beautiful in your whole being. How I envy you!"

"Envy, Lalage?"

"Yes, I envy you. Why not, Retta? What have I to be proud of? I have no beauty such as yours; I have no love such as yours; I am not even loved as you are. I am a child—a mere child—a useless, powerless child."

"Lalage, don't talk so. You will have womanhood and its blessings before long."

"What is womanhood without beauty, without love?" the girl questioned fiercely.

Then suddenly falling again into her strange, calm state, she playfully continued:

"Retta, you might be loved for the golden glory of your hair. Perhaps you are. Supposing now—only in play, mind—supposing, like the woman in the Bible, by whom Sampson was shorn of his locks and his strength

Someone was looking
across her shoulder.



at the same time, I was to cut off *your* hair? What then?"

"Lalage! Lalage!" the other interposed, "you must not say these things."

"I'm only in play, Retta—only in play, remember that. And then supposing, like Jael, I was to strike the nail into Sisera's temple—you being for the time Sisera."

"No more, Lalage; my blood runs nearly cold to hear a child talk so."

"But"—Lalage laughed in return—"I am only in play. It struck me that, shorn of your hair, you might not be worth the loving; and, on the other hand, shorn of your life you could not love so freely and well, if at all. But it was only in play I said it, Retta; that was all." Then she kissed her.

A d p s e e d , a d R a f g s e k w
h r c e f y , a d b g w t s e s d,
q u y d e h r i e n a t t e g s w d
w s s . I n t e i s e l L e g w r s s , a d a
q k o s e r m e t h e d s s d a n e s n
u n h r l y f e , i n f t , a s s g a e t h r
w e m n ; j o s a s o f j e k e s

Her cheeks pulsed and pulsed again. Her fingers

worked spitefully, and some hidden passion, becoming at last so utterly uncontrollable, impelled her to seize a veil lying close beside her and savagely rend it into strips.

By that time Retta had unconsciously fallen into a gentle sleep.

With a vacant, far-off look in her deep black eyes, Lalage knotted the strips of veiling and twisted them into a species of thong.

With intuitive stealth she attached an end to each wrist of the slumbering woman.

Then she deftly withdrew herself, and an instant later was rapidly binding the astonished Retta fast to the chair. Her actions spoke of a strength bordering upon the strength of madness. A pent-up fury burst like a cyclone in one sudden impulse, and she panted like a hound.

Fixing her victim beneath her own weight, kneeling on her, thrusting her roughly into position, she tied the thongs with cruel swiftness, and a few minutes later her guardian angel—now her victim—was at the mercy of her merciless heart.

Thoroughly awakened to the girl's malignant fury, Retta struggled and writhed; but her efforts were all of no avail. So dexterous and certain was the power of the girl's wrath, that Retta felt the trammels were fastened upon her like the grip of death.

Try as she might, she found it impossible to escape. Hope and fear alternated in the possession of her mind. She tried to fancy her captivity as the result of a mere girlish freak, but upon each recurrence of this thought her eyes wandered towards her captor, and she visibly trembled.

She could utter no word; she could neither think nor plead. Agonising grief, rather than anger, filled her heart at the merciless ingratitude of her deeply loved Lalage.

Then Lalage placed her arms akimbo and spoke:

"Retta, you are beautiful. Your virtue is rewarded with martyrdom. Go still farther and deny your love for Victor. Say your vows and your love for me exclude all thoughts of him."

Approaching her victim she laved her hands in the bath of tresses, and, withdrawing them, she smiled as she saw some of the burning threads entwined about her fingers.

"Lalage—Lalage," Retta complained in low tones, broken by the weight of her suffering, "I cannot deny Victor. I have been mistaken in my vows. He is dear, very dear, to me, and I have made a promise I could never fulfil were he but to return."

"You say that?" mockingly questioned Lalage. "Then you are a wicked woman. Why don't you deny him and be eased of your pain?" Saying which she drew the tensioned knots still tighter.

The tortured woman groaned, but even then her heart was full of forgiveness, and she would utter no cry lest it apprised the other inmates of her loved one's treachery.

"Deny him, deny him! Even say you deny him!" urged the girl maliciously.

"I cannot. Release me, Lalage, release me, and I will kiss you—I will kiss you now!" And her beautiful face looked upwards in expectant hope.

Lalage kissed her fiercely, and then echoed a shrill, hard laugh.

The kiss so stung Retta that she perceptibly winced. The girl laughed again—this time more harshly.

"Deny your love for Victor and you are free!" she said with a strange commingling of entreaty and spite.

"Never, Lalage, never! I cannot!"

Again the hands sought the captive tresses, and again the fingers withdrew intertwined with the golden threads.

Great scalding tears—more of grief than of pain—rolled down the beautiful face, but still the tongue was silent.

"If I had a knife," mused Lalage deliberately, her tones more terrible for being suppressed. "I would rob you of your hair—your life—your all."

"Lalage!"

This one short cry sped from the martyr's heart like the cry of an angel in the clutch of fiends. To her reticence in blaming her torturer, may be attributed the other's steadily developing fury.

Raising her clenched hand, she savagely struck her victim across the eyes.

A cry of agony followed the act, but not for an instant did Lalage waver in her deadly purpose.

As Retta's eyes, shot with blood, slowly opened in a long, appealing look Lalage snatched the photograph again, kissing it passionately. Then tearing it into a hundred pieces, she showered them upon the agonised woman; and at last, losing all mortal restraint, advanced and struck her—struck her several furious blows upon the body.

A resounding shriek rang loudly.

In an instant all the inmates of the convent were awake and flocking to the scene.

Retta by this time was quite unconscious, and might have been taken for dead, save for a troubled heaving of the bosom.

With merciful, womanly instinct, a few sprang to the captive's release.

The remainder, forgetting their sanctity, fell like furies upon Lalage; but she, with marvellous dexterity, struck her way fiercely through the crowd, and, without a look behind, made hasty escape.

Dashing through the corridors, she came to a window overlooking the convent wall.

Flinging it open, she took the plunge, and by the help of that inscrutable Providence, ever guardful of abandoned sinners, landed safely on the summit of the wall.

Another leap and she was lost to sight.

The pale faces, looking out from their shrouds behind her, sickened and turned away.

CHAPTER II.

A FEW months after the above event, the roar of battle broke thunderously over the Convent of St. Ursula.

Musket shot pelted like leaden dust about the shambling walls.

Smoke and fire panted from the muzzles of cannon—thick steaming crimson sparkled on every sword—the very horses seemed charged with inflammable hate. Ever and anon a black enveloped cloud swept by with a whirl and a rush, telling of a deadly charge.

This and more was watched by the pale-faced sisters of St. Ursula. Foremost amongst them, with divine pity gleaming in her eyes, was Retta.

Throughout the day—far into the night—she listened to the terrible uproar, and each woeful cry found echo in her heart.

At length, after long dragging hours of conflict, a wild hurrah! swelled mightily upon her ear, and the atmosphere, hitherto so heavy, seemed to become suddenly lighter. Crisp, sharp shouts, some of rage,

some of victory, resounded from the field in different tongues, and the heaving fire of iron stomachs grew less frequent. Horses gulped and snorted in terror, stumbling as they flew, spurred and goaded by the conquered.

Again, and with super-added power, the hurrahs fell quickly upon the thickening gloom; and, looking forth, Retta saw a green-coated, white-breasted, star-hangled column of cavalry flying directly towards the convent.

At this juncture a yellow-faced moon mounted the sky, shining clemently down upon the retreating line.

Immediately in the centre Retta descried two figures keeping steadily together.

Why these two so forcibly attracted her attention

had been lost in the conflict. His figure was exceedingly slim and effeminate, and he rode with an easy lightness most unusual in a soldier.

The other sat like a soldier; he was a soldier; there could be no doubt about that.

By reason of his wearing a helmet the eager woman behind the casement was not able to discern his features, any more than to feel they were handsome and perfectly fearless.

"But where," she asked herself abruptly, "where had she seen before that figure sitting with imperial stateliness upon the gaunt black horse? How was it every action of the arm, every movement of the muscle, seemed familiar to her?"



Two figures keeping steadily together.

she could not then say; but no matter where she looked, or how general a conception she tried to get of the situation, her glance immediately reverted to this particular pair.

Moving to a more convenient position, she peered forth, scrutinising them intently. On they came, their swinging pace gathering impetus with every stride—their flying horses neighing with terror, their manes entangled, and their flanks bleeding from the deeply-driven spurs.

With each thud of hoofs the two horsemen became ever more prominent, and at length Retta was able in some degree to distinguish their faces.

One appeared to be a black-haired youth, whose helmet

The cavalcade by this time was very near. Resolutely tensioning her nerves she looked again.

The figure, with its embodiment of stately power, swept on and on; the other, that of the slim, effeminate youth, struggling to keep up.

So sure as the former applied the spurs and lashed his charger, the other did likewise. Each extra effort was followed in a similar, though more brutal manner, by the youth; and by dint of this, the pair eventually headed the column by an appreciable distance.

Faster and faster they flew, leaving a veil of dust in their wake, and very shortly were hard upon the convent.

Approaching a little closer, they wheeled suddenly round to the quarter where the wall was within leaping distance of the corridor window.

Retta flew as Lalage had done, arriving just in time to see the horsemen rein in their foaming steeds and dismount.

Clattering behind, she could hear the column, apparently making for the pass, and at an increasing distance the shouts of the victorious pursuing redcoats.

Hastily unfastening the window, she flung it open. Simultaneously the figure, which had so strangely arrested her eyes and thoughts, turned full towards her.

The face turned upwards, and she recognised the man who was truly the sole and only hope of her life.

Having eyes for nothing and nobody, having no fear, forgetting for the moment even her sympathy with the sufferers, she beckoned him frantically.

He saw her, and a moment later had mounted the convent wall. He was preparing to spring, when a rifle shot rang sharply behind him, and staggering, he lost balance, falling back again to the base of the wall.

Retta just had time to see the youth's rifle descend from firing position when the thunderous cavalcade dashed passed.

Instantly the youth was prostrated beneath the flying tread of the escaping horsemen, and a thousand steel-clad hoofs pressed and crushed the life from his fragile form.

Mad with desperation, Retta leapt from her coign to the wall, and a second later was breathlessly kneeling by the body of her lover.

Raising his head so that it might rest upon her arm she found the wound was comparatively slight, and that the bullet had nowhere lodged itself.

Almost unconsciously Retta breathed her lover's name, and, glorious with love and reverence, the soldier's eyes opened, drinking in the radiant beauty of his guardian angel.

"Victor—Victor!" she whispered passionately.

"Retta!" said the soldier lover. "I live, and am free—

free! Rescued on the eve of war, I came and fought my hardest. Providence in the shape of a youth has preserved me from many a shot and sword thrust—but," raising his glance inquiringly, "but where is he? He was close beside me awhile ago."

Retta's tears flowed still faster as she answered:

"He lies yonder, trampled to death by the flying line of cavalry."

"Poor Lal!" exclaimed the soldier, slowly rising. "I must go to him."

"Lal?" repeated Retta, with a sudden twitching at her heart strings.

"Yes," returned the man. "We called him Lal because he was so girlish. It was my pet name for him."

Something prevented Retta from telling her lover how she had seen the youth's rifle raised in menace against him, and a nervous fear gnawed at her heart, as she supported him towards the body.

Somehow she was prepared for what she saw. The black wealth of hair was not to be mistaken, and the contour of the lovely figure had at one time been too dear to her to escape recognition, even in its present marred state.

No start shook her as she gazed upon the pallid face, although her thoughts were very, very heavy and sorrowful.

She had seen and loved that which then lay stark and cold before her.

Her thoughts went momentarily back to the incident of the lonely chamber when this poor, mangled body had towered above her in ungovernable fury.

She stooped and kissed the lifeless face and, lingering for a moment, prayed.

Then turning the sods, they heaped them tenderly upon the body.

DUNSTAN DENN.



Falling back again to the base of the wall.



MILBURGH MOAT.

I HAVE been asked to tell a ghost story. But I don't believe in ghost stories, so how can I tell a story without conviction? Besides, old sceptic as I am, if I knew—I do know *one*—a well-authentic story, I should never have any real faith in it. I should always imagine some hocus-pocus, some modern magic was at the back of it.

What has one to say who has firmly disbelieved and as firmly scoffed at the supernatural all his life, when he is brought face to face with a fact for which he can vouch soberly and truthfully, and of which he can give no solution.

It is one of the spiteful idiosyncrasies of those feebly-constituted ghosts, who are so little satisfied with spirit worlds that they must return to this, always to hanker after the most picturesque of human habitations.

Milburgh Moat is a perfectly-appointed house in Kent, of the time of Henry VIII., grey with age, except where green ivy or orange lichens had draped its walls with colours. The elms and beeches which hid it from the high road had served to shade the Druids; and the very rooks as they cawed seemed to choke with awe for the antiquity of their branches.

The moat itself, which gave its name to Milburgh home, being supplied with springs, was always full in some parts and known to be very deep. Yellow and white water lilies starred its surface, and elderly carp, which history said had been placed there by Anne Boleyn, were seen to solemnly follow each other round and round when flies were giddy enough to flit there.

Nothing could be more attractive to an artist's eye than the Tudor towers, with their crenulated walls; the bridge without a parapet which crossed, with its broad causeway, to the stone gateway where once drawbridge and portcullis had effectually forbidden an entrance; and the massed ivy that entirely concealed many of the turrets, or threw a shadow over the casements beneath.

Within, the carved oak, which adorned beam and joist, staircase and balustrade alike, gave an antique and ghostly look to every room except to those in the added wing which was beautiful as art could make it, in style and furniture as modern as a mansion in Belgravia or Fifth Avenue. The two drawing-rooms, which opened into each other, flanked by a long conservatory of Persian tiles and Bohemian glass, were so nineteenth century in comfort and attractive luxury that no one who sat there on the brocaded ottomans, or flirted among the blossoming orchids, could imagine that a ghost would have the supreme bad taste to intrude where it was not wanted.

But that Milburgh Moat was haunted was a popular legend, not only to the yokels round, who hated being

caught by darkness in its neighbourhood, but to the family of Lord Carwinkle, all the members of which had heard noises and seen sights quite inexplicable to the modern conjuror.

The present inhabitants of the Moat were all sensible people, and hospitable to a degree.

Lord Carwinkle was a young man of thirty, having only succeeded to the title since his father's death, two years previously, just after his own marriage to as sweet a girl as can be found in a month of British Sundays.

She had a boy a few months old, bright and beautiful, and the idol of his father. Lord Carwinkle's three sisters were staying at the Moat, and two or three eligible young men on the army list, a bachelor lordling and the parson made up the guests I had been asked to meet.

There was lots of sport in the neighbourhood, a fair pack of hounds, and of an evening all the charms of pleasant conversation with accomplished women or cultivated men.

But the subject of ghosts so often introduced at Christmas was tabooed. If any man verged on the brink of ghost land he was profoundly shut up by a chill response, or the conversation as abruptly changed to something more congenial by our host.

Though I had met Lord and Lady Carwinkle often in their London house, this was my first visit to Milburgh Moat. I had, however, heard something about some mysterious warning that was supposed to be connected with deaths in the family, and I had naturally avoided anything that might hurt the susceptibilities of such amiable friends.

I had no belief in supernatural admonitions, and certainly I little expected to be a medium between the spirit world and my host.

It was Christmas Eve; after the most charming evening in Lady Carwinkle's drawing-room; after the dear old English games, without which no Christmas is complete; and after a country dance for which the old hall was used, and at which, I remember, the shadows thrown by the yule-log seemed to fill the roof with the shades of fantastic ancestors; that having bid good-night and a merry Christmas to visitors, guests and family, the few men who finished their day with a weed in the billiard-room came together without their host.

The fact was that his baby-boy had been taken suddenly with something like croup, and both father and mother were anxious and restless. I recall the fact that Lady Carwinkle bade us good-night, leaning over the gallery that ran round the beautiful hall.

It was Tom Calliber, of the Hussars, who spoke:

"I never saw such a place for galleries, by Jove! I adore old oak carvings somehow. Must have been a monastery once, don't you know?"

"Yes," added Charlie Freake, "and the nuns came into the galleries to throw pillows at the monks, I dare say."

"By-the-way, Captain Rattler, you're in the blue room, I think?" said young Lord D'Oonuthen, the bachelor lordling who was expected to carry off one of the sisters.

"Well, I was only put in there to-day. There seems to be something wrong with the roof of the room where I have been, and Carwinkle asked me if I should mind changing for a night. Knowing he felt more intimate with me, as I'm an old traveller, of course, I made no objections, but I have not been into the—what do you call—blue-room, yet."

"Hum," muttered the parson. "I don't envy you."

"By Jove!" broke in Charlie Freake. "There's a carved oak gallery there that would delight South Kensington."

"My bedroom large enough to support a gallery?"

"A regular organ loft, my boy; only no one knows how to get into it without a ladder."

"Perhaps no one wants to get into it," suggested Tom Calliber. And then the conversation drifted into generalities.

A pool was made up, and as there were enough present to reach spot brown I had plenty of time to indulge the parson by answering all his questions. Among others he asked me if I had any fixed belief in the supernatural.

To my diplomatic "why?" he answered that the family was averse to sleeping in the blue-room, as something disagreeable was supposed to follow.

"Oh! dear no! Only the family!" he added. "I have slept there in summer and was never annoyed; but then, I belong to the church, and may be respected."

To which I replied: "That, though no churchman, I trusted that phantoms would respect my slumbers, if they did not me."

The game finished, we all found our way to our rooms, my old friend, the parson, bidding me good-night at the door of my bedroom with a sort of compassionate tenderness in his voice that surprised me.

Apologetically he informed me before we parted that the room I now occupied was the oldest in the building, and was supposed to have some mysterious communication with the moat.

"But our good host," he allowed, "would not ask you to rest in any uncomfortable room, so I wish you a very good-night and pleasant dreams."

I opened the door and went in. My candle was not blown out by a chill gust; nor did bats fly round the apartment, and no uncanny life seemed to be present even in the form of moths or crickets.

But the room was far too large for a bedroom. There was a fire burning briskly; an excellent four-post bed; a dressing-table, on which all a man could want was carefully laid out; a sofa; books on a small table; logs of old oak to throw on the fire; comforts of the snugest kind in the cosy boudoir, but only making this immense room look friendless and dreary by comparison. The ceiling was of darkest oak, and only here and there, where the firelight caught the colour of an armorial bearing, could its existence be perceived. The walls were hung with fine specimens of Arras tapestries, while at intervals sombre full-length portraits of ancestors frowned from their ebony frames.

At one end of the room was a carved oak gallery which, at an elevation of about twelve feet from the floor,

ran across the entire room. Two doors opened apparently on to this—one in the wall, at right angles; the other at the end of the gallery and parallel with it. From the location of my room I had fancied this wall, in which was this second door, was the outer wall of the castle, but evidently I was wrong.

I lighted two candles in massive silver sticks on the mantel-piece and two more on my toilet-table. But their united illumination only made the ancestors glare more fitfully, and just throw out the twisted colonettes of the gallery balustrade in a sort of bluish mist. All beyond was darkness. Somehow or other—strong tea I suppose, did it—I did not feel sleepy in the least. But the loneliness of that big, dark place was intense. I would have given anything for a chum to talk over old times, or a wife to quarrel with.

Faute de mieux, I mixed myself a weak grog, and taking up a book (I remember well it was Mrs. Crowe's "Night Side of Nature") I was well immersed in some tale of a Paris murder and its supernatural revelation, when I was rather astonished at being interrupted by the distant tones of an organ.

There was nothing surprising in the fact of organ-playing in Milburgh Moat, for there was a chapel attached to the house, as in many old Catholic family castles, but at such an hour it seemed scarcely probable that any one of the ladies who had gone to rest would get up after midnight to practise an *introit* in such a locality.

The music was sad and fitful: the notes moaned like a departed organist's spirit, and seemed to harmonise with a wailing wind which was sighing outside.

My ears were painfully on the alert, and all my senses seemed to be at abnormal tension. I had used my last logs on the fire, and a bluish flame had taken the place of a yellow blaze.

I heard a door slam, apparently in the distance, and then my nostrils were offended by a mouldy smell, as of damp, upturned earth.

"I looked round at first without moving anything but my eyes. Something seemed to tell me I should see what I did not want to see.

The far end of the room was invisible; in absolute darkness. Nearer, the blue hangings of the great bed loomed like the trappings on some catafalque. On the glasses on my table, on the mirror's silver frame, the blue frame was reflected and danced like wisp-lights over a grave.

In spite of a strong will, my head now turned towards the gallery, and as I turned I became instinctively conscious of a presence there.

As my eyes pierced the darkness, I could see that a figure was sitting at the balustrade, with both elbows on the rail, two long, white hands pushing back the hair that hung, dead and grizzled, over the forehead.

The blue flames of the log began to multiply. By the ghastly light I could distinguish a greenish-yellow face, drawn as to the skin over prominent cheekbones, looking straight at me with dull, staring eyes. The stare was that of a galvanised corpse; horrible but fascinating.

My mouth dried up. I felt that awful shiver, that fear of the supernatural seems to give to the body, beginning with a chill in the ankles and rising up till it seizes the roots of your hair. If I could have spoken I would have addressed the thing, but my tongue refused, and only clung classically to my jaws. "*Vox faucibus hoiesit.*"

The fingers long, and, oh, so thin! brushed the hair back spasmodically; the wizened lips drew back and up across the yellow teeth in a diabolical grin that would

have chilled a gravedigger. The laugh was there, but no sound except the moaning diapason of the distant organ.

Then the figure rose, spreading her arms and tossing the tangled dead hair over her meagre shoulders.

With a movement like the vapour that rises from a marsh at night, the vision passed on along the gallery, turning three times to fix that stony stare and hideous smile on my scarcely beating heart; when, with a scream like a night hawk, she opened the door in the wall, and, still looking at me, walked out into the rays of the moon, when the door seemed to close of itself behind her.

No sooner had the presence disappeared, than with a violent shake I recollected myself. It must be some mad woman, some family skeleton, broken from confinement. Follow her I must or there might be some dreadful tragedy before the morning.

But how? I had no knowledge of the moat's topography, and I could not wake all the household at such an hour. Necessity is the mother of invention. Dragging rapidly the tables and chairs on to the top of a walnut cabinet I managed to get a firm grip of the balustrade, and without much difficulty succeeded in getting over the oak into the gallery. The planks were rotten and thick with dust, and even gaped ominously beneath my feet. How the maniac could have passed as she did was incomprehensible. It was only by striding across chasms in the broken floor that I reached the far end.

When I arrived there the door was locked.

What was I to do?

But no. The key was inside. It could not be looked at all.

Seizing the twisted iron handle of the door, I prepared to wrench the key, when lock and all came off in my hands, rusted with age from out the rotten wood. The door swung slowly open, and as the moonbeams struck me I saw that the door in the wall opened on to an abyss!

At forty feet below was the still waters of the moat without a ripple, reflecting the bridge that crossed it in the winter brightness of the full moon.

Horrible! The wretched creature had been drowned!

Closing the door, and climbing swiftly back to my room, I seized my light, and, putting on my dressing-jacket, rushed off to Carwinkle's room, feeling some step must be taken ere it was too late.

As luck would have it, as I got into the corridor leading to his room, he came out and, seeing me, put his finger on his lip, saying:

"My poor baby is worse. I cannot sleep."

"So sorry, my dear Carwinkle; but there is worse than that."

"What can possibly be worse?" he said, with a tremulous lip.

"Some woman has drowned herself in the moat."

"Woman? Drowned herself?" said Lord Carwinkle.

"Yes. I saw her pass along my gallery."

"Good Heavens! Then you have seen her? My poor babe will die."

The baby-boy did not die; but a day or two after I left Millburgh Moat I heard that Carwinkle's beautiful wife had stepped over the causeway of the bridge, and met death by drowning just beneath the blue-room door.

How do they account for it?

JOHN PORLEY.

The Way It Came About.



LANCHE BARTON walked over to the window before she answered. She seemed to be counting the tops of the trees in the park.

"You are in love, my dear boy," she said at last without turning—"infatuated, and naturally you think her all you say. You may be right, of course; there is always a chance of that—"

"You are jesting," he said stiffly. "I had hoped, at least, to have your serious attention in this matter, considering our long-standing friendship—"

"My dear boy!"

"Or perhaps it didn't amount to friendship, after all?"

"Why, of course it did, George. How can you be so childish?" she said, coming towards him with outstretched hands. "Dear friend, it is only because I am anxious for your happiness that you have mistaken my little bit of misplaced pessimism. I am sure she is all you think her. I know her so slightly that I cannot possibly be expected to do anything but agree with you,

which I do. 'Everyone knows, of course, how beautiful she is—'

"I sometimes wish she weren't," he said, half sighing; "it gives a man like me such a very poor chance. You see, her people expect her to make a brilliant marriage, so how can I dare—?"

"But you must. 'Faint heart,' you know; and, besides, if she is all you think her—and I'm sure you are right—you are doing her a great injustice in supposing she would ever marry just for the sake of making a brilliant marriage. You say you have reason to believe that she has somewhat singled you out, and that were you not so poor a man you would have dared some time ago. Don't you think you are giving your money-powerful rivals a very good start if you avoid her, and are afraid to go near her, and won't show how you feel and won't speak? You aren't behaving like a man in love, even if you believe you are acting unselfishly and honourably, and she may think so too. Besides, don't you think you are just a little selfish in all this?"

"Selfish?"

"Yes! You say you are afraid to think it, but you dare to hope she cares for you. If that is the case, and she is the woman you believe her to be, her only hope of happiness in life will be with you. It isn't necessary to

dwell upon whether money would make up for the lack of sympathy and love, is it? If you are mistaken as regards her feelings towards you—oh, I am only saying if—why, at all events, you will have been chivalrous enough to have sacrificed—shall we say your vanity?—in the chance that you may be doing what she most wants in the world.”

“You are right, you are right, you are always right,” he exclaimed, pressing both her hands earnestly.

“I think I’m right—I don’t know why; I only feel—and I’m a woman,” she supplemented softly as she wiped a tear from her cheek, and smiled through others that gathered in her eyes and threatened to follow.

“You are an angel.” He said it tenderly.

“Go, there is a dear boy, and do what I say—no, don’t mind about my foolish tears; they’ll be over in a minute—and George!” she called after him as he was closing the door, “come back here as soon as you can—I want to congratulate you, you know.”

“Yes,” he said. “God bless you, Blanche,” and he was gone.

Then she put her hand to her throat, to try and stop the lump that was rising there, and called “George, George, come back!” but he was beyond the sound of her voice by then. She buried her face in the cushions of a settee, and cried out all her poor, lonely, breaking heart. Then she pulled herself together, straightened her dress, and went to a glass.

“Ugh,” she said, smoothing her hair, “a pretty picture, truly! And he will be coming back, but not for a time, a very long time. I ought not to have made him promise to, poor boy, but he will forget, with her—Oh! my hateful red eyes—I’m going off, I’m losing my looks—no wonder he comes to me for advice about his love for another woman. I hate him,” she cried fiercely. “Ugh! I hate him!” and she stamped her foot passionately, and cried a little more.

“I’ll burn his letters,” she said, going over to an escritoire, and unlocking it with a key hidden in the folds of her dress. “I’ll burn his letters, and his photograph, and everything that reminds me of him. I’ll not be at home if he comes back. I’ll never be at home to him again—

“His letters!” and she laughed bitterly, and a little wildly, at the packet held at arm’s length with his photograph on the outside, all so carefully tied with pale blue ribbon. “His letters! Only friendly little notes, kind and all that, but not a word that signifies love, and yet I always fancied I read it between the lines. What an imaginative fool I was! I’ll open the packet and pick one out just haphazard, and see if I can find a meaning between the lines to-day.”

She burst into a peal of laughter, and tore the sheet of paper into shreds; then she read another, and another, tearing them up as she read.

“What a splendid blaze these will make!” she mused, with a bitter laugh, looking at the heap in her lap. “Still, the very chilliness of them would, I should think, damp the ardour of the fire. Now for the photograph!” and she scrutinised it carefully, critically, and coldly. “Poor thing! and I have wasted my life for you! This is the first day I have seen you just as you are. Good eyes—yes, the eyes are good—irritable nose, weak chin, cruel mouth—Heavens! is that the

bell?” and, eventually realising the situation, she prepared for a rapid exit, lifting her dress as she went to prevent the torn letters and photograph from falling to the floor. But before she accomplished her flight the door opened quickly, and George Cranstoun was there.

“Oh!” she cried, horror-stricken at the sight of his face, and forgetting the general absurdness of her appearance. “How white you are—George! she hasn’t—” but he had sunk on the settee and buried his face in his hands. “Dear boy! I wish I could comfort you,” and she sat beside him, forgetting all about the miserable letters in her lap. “George!” she said softly and soothingly, “George, dear!” and she knelt before him, letting the bits of paper and photograph and everything scatter about the floor.

He moved his hands from his face and looked at her helplessly, scarcely noticing the litter about him which she was trying, with little hysterical laughs, to pick up, or cover up, or hide in some way.

“George, dear, don’t look; I mean, tell me about everything,” and, in her excitement, she put her two little hands over his eyes; but before she had done this, he saw, to his bewilderment, his own face staring at him from the carpet.

She put her knee on it, and said coaxingly:

“Now dear, dear George, don’t be unhappy! I will comfort you, console you, help you! Let me try. We won’t talk about her any more,” and she still kept her hands over his eyes.

“She’s engaged to old Ingram—she’s preferred a peer to a pauper!—small shame to her! You don’t care now, do you, now you know she has no heart?”

He didn’t answer, but he moved her hands gently from his eyes, and kissed them, and tried to raise her; but she laughed hysterically:

“Please don’t, George, I’d rather stay here,” and she looked anxiously round at some far-off bits. But he put his arms about her and lifted her up beside him, and she sat staring down at the murder which was out.

“Now I will pick up this *débris*,” he said quietly, “and my poor self, who has been so ignominiously trampled in the dust. And my letters, too, I see—I can’t help seeing.”

He piled the fragments in a heap and laid the photograph upon it. “We can hardly have the funeral pyre in here!” he said laughing. “Where shall it be?”

But she only stared helplessly at the heap with wide, red-lidded eyes.

“Blanche,” he said softly, taking both her hands, and looking into her face very steadily, “Blanche, you said just now that you would comfort me, console me, help me. I know you said it, hardly knowing what words you used in your desire to hide this,” pointing to the heap on the floor. “Was it the more sincere because of that? Tell me, Blanche, tell me!”

“Why do you want to humiliate me more?” she answered, turning her face away.

“I don’t want to humiliate you, dear, but everything in the world now depends, for me, upon whether you meant those words or not. Tell me, Blanche.”

“We will have the funeral pyre first,” she answered, “before I tell you.” And she cried a little more, and he tried to comfort her, and they had the funeral pyre, and she told him.

MARY KEEGAN.



The Ransom of Wealth.

It was a glorious Sunday in June. Boulter's Lock was full—so full that it was a matter for wonderment how the boats could all have got in. Launches, punts, canoes, and rowing-boats jostled one another uncere- moniously, while the sun smote down upon the confused, hot, struggling humanity who occupied the various crafts.

There was but one house-boat in the lock—a gorgeous floating palace, resplendent with gold paint and luxurious hangings; on board a collection of ladies and their knights, lolling at ease in deck-chairs beneath an awning as white as the clouds that chased each other across the summer sky.

The owner of the boat—a wealthy stockbroker, by name Tester—sat in the middle of his guests, by his side a girl, clad in some soft, white, clinging material, that only heightened the delicate beauty of her face.

Her eyes rove round over the mass of boats below her. Suddenly a faint colour rose to her face as she bowed smilingly towards a Canadian canoe where two men lay, comfortably enough, amid all the turmoil of the lock.

One of the men raised his hat. The other looked curiously at the house-boat and the girl who sat there enthroned upon it.

"Who is it, Dick?" he muttered.

"Lady Evelyn Tremayne," answered his companion curtly. "Look out, man; the gates are opening;" and in a few minutes the canoe had shot out into the sunlit river, while the house-boat swept on behind the fussy little launch, its tug.

Dick Harwood followed the craft with his eye until a bend of the river hid it from view. He had grown very silent all of a sudden—so silent that at last his brother officer, Captain Peterson, of the 43rd Dragoon Guards, felt constrained to fathom the mystery of his quietude.

"Stunning sort of girl Lady Evelyn Tremayne looks!" he remarked. "I never knew you were a pal of hers. Daughter of the Earl of Purdock, isn't she?"

"Yes," answered Harwood shortly. He didn't seem communicatively inclined, but Peterson was determined not to be thus put off.

"Where did you meet her?" he went on. "Come, let me into the secret! I'll be as dark as the grave."

"I met her first at a soirée, at the Earl's house. My father and he—the Earl!—were old college chums; I have been round there three or four times since. That chap sitting next to her was Tester, one of the richest men in London. Old Purdock is jolly hard up, and I believe that he wants to recoup himself by selling his daughter to him! Ah, it makes me sick!"

Peterson whistled softly. "By Jove, Dick!" he said, "I never knew you had an affair. I thought you were above such things. Never mind, old chap—"

"It's all over now," broke in the other savagely. "Thank goodness we're ordered off to India on Wednesday. Perhaps Jubbulpore and the station life will knock it out of me! Anyhow, I don't mean to think of her any more."

And so the matter ended for the present, but it was with an aching heart that Dick Harwood leant over the taffrail of the outward bound troopship, a few days later, reviling the fate that kept him from England and the side of the girl who held his heart, who was as far away from him then as he was from Tester's riches.

James Tester himself was one of a class by no means uncommon. The son of a country lawyer, he had, by means of a clear, though by no means unscrupulous brain, pushed himself into the front rank of the army of the *nouveaux riches*.

Gold, he had found, was the "Open Sesame" to many an otherwise unattainable end. Gold brought luxury, luxury begat friends, among them the Earl of Purdock, who, in the rich stockbroker, saw at length a means whereby his slender purse-strings might be enlarged.

A mansion in Park Lane, a shooting-box in the Highlands, a steam-yacht. These and more did Tester own. Neither was he, like so many of his class, a blatant, overbearing Cæsar. Indeed, he was possessed of a certain amount of good looks, could speak the Queen's English, was in every way an ideal son-in-law. Yes, for Harwood was right. The Earl had chosen him as the future husband of Lady Evelyn.

Poor Lady Evelyn! Poor Dick Harwood! Love had entered their lives from the first moment they had met. Yet Dick was poor, poor at least among those in whose society he moved. The 43rd was an expensive regiment, and now he had gone to India. He had seen her, perhaps, for the last time, and she was to marry James Tester, though hope still lingered in Dick's heart.

And so six months rolled away. Tester had declared his love, and had been accepted. The Earl was jubilant, and everyone congratulated Lady Evelyn to her face, and sneered at her behind her back.

The wedding-day was fixed. Then came the first bolt from the blue, in the form of an impassioned letter from Harwood, telling Evelyn that his love had grown to such dimensions that he felt he must write to her, bidding her try and wait for him, to at least write and assure him of her love. A mad, hopeless letter, which was never

answered, though the reading of it brought a blinding mist of tears into the girl's eyes, as the full truth of what this marriage of hers was dawned upon her.

But she thrust the letter away among her most cherished possessions. It was only a dream, only a sweet, sad, hopeless dream.

The marriage was a most gorgeous affair. The presents were numerous and costly. Everyone was loud in praise of the bride's beauty, envious, too, of the thousands that would now be hers.

The honeymoon was to be spent in Scotland, at Tester's own Highland seat. And now came the second blow to Mrs. Tester's happiness, that happiness so well assumed, and, therefore, by so much the more a cruel mockery.

She had bade adieu to her father, who, flushed with champagne and heartfelt relief at the end to his own straitened circumstances, had kissed her with more than usual warmth. Suddenly a cablegram was brought to her. Outwardly calm, she took it and thrust it into the pocket of her travelling-dress. What could it mean? Dick! It must be Dick! What could it mean?

On the first opportunity she opened it. And as she read it, she realised to the full what it meant. Her heart seemed to stop still within her. Merciful heavens! It was too cruel! For these are the words she saw, and they seemed to burn into her brain till they were stamped upon it in letters of liquid fire:

Uncle dead—Left me fortune—Coming home—No need to wait now.—DICK.

"Too late! Too late! Oh, Dick! Dick! What will you say? What will you say?"

* * * * *

October had come. The Scotch moors were glorious with purple heather, the hills beyond golden and red with the tints of autumn, and at Glenarchy—such was the name of Tester's mansion—was assembled a goodly company of "lords and ladies gay" come thither to assist in the slaughter of Tester's grouse.

And among the guests was Dick Harwood, late of the 43rd. It had been a tremendous blow to him, this marriage of Lady Evelyn. He had left Bombay in a fever of joyous anticipation, chafing at the weary miles of ocean that still lay between him and his love.

In the blindness of his devotion all thoughts of Tester had fled. His Evelyn would never have been coerced into marrying the stockbroker, Cressus though he were. No, no. Speed on, good ship, speed on to home and happiness!

Tester had been profuse in his invitation.

"My wife and I will be only too charmed to see you," he had written. "I can offer you good shooting, and I don't think you will be bored, at least, not if Evelyn and I can help it."

And so he had accepted Tester's cordiality; he felt he must see Evelyn—though it could but mean pain for them both—must feast his eyes for a few short weeks upon her face. Then it would be good-bye to his hopes. He was rich now—pah! what good were his riches?—and he would be off away into the world, he and Tammil, there to try and forget the one real passion of his life.

Tammil would make an excellent companion—an Indian whose life Harwood had saved in a hill raid, and who had from that event followed his master like a dog, sworn to serve him till the death.

The pallor seemed to have deepened on Evelyn's face,

and in Harwood's eyes she was more lovely, therefore, than ever she had been before. He longed to see her alone, to speak to her for a few moments unobserved, to tell her she had wrecked his life, but for days no chance was given him.

At last, one evening, the opportunity came. It was a lovely night, warm as it sometimes is in October, and Harwood had asked Evelyn if she would care for a short stroll in the garden that flanked the house.

She had looked up at him piteously and then, with a forced smile, consented.

Harwood lit a cigar, and together they paced the trim walks that ran between the shrubs and bushes dotted here and there. For a while neither spoke.

"Dick!" It was Evelyn who first broke the silence. "Dick, forgive me. I—"

But the next moment her voice died away, for she was in Harwood's arms, and he was kissing her madly, breathing out the while heartbroken words of love, the love pent up within him now so long.

But presently she broke away from him. The tears were streaming down her face. "Dick! Dick!" she murmured. "This is wrong, wrong! You forget—"

"Forget," broke in the man, his voice trembling with his passion, "I wish to heaven I did! Forget! Is it forgetfulness to hunger for you for years, to think only of you, to make you more than anything else in heaven or earth? Ah, you can't understand. It is all one to you whether a man's life is blighted or not so long as you have your every whim gratified. But what—forgive me, forgive me! I am a brute—worse than a brute! Don't cry, Evelyn, don't cry, or you will drive me mad."

There was a gentle rustling sound in the bushes behind them. But neither heard the noise, nor did they see the little dusky figure that stole away, to be swallowed up in the gloom.

* * * * *

It was an ideal day for the grouse. And the birds were plentiful, and every one of the men were keen sportsmen. Luncheon was to be in the woods that decked the hills behind Glenarchy; there the ladies were to wait the coming of the men.

They were nearly at the appointed place, when suddenly Dick Harwood, mounted on a sturdy Highland pony, dashed up to them, his face white with horror, his eyes only for one, the woman he loved.

"Mrs. Tester, I must speak to you for a moment, in private; ladies excuse me!" There was a ring of authority in his voice that was not to be withstood. He led Evelyn apart: "You know Tammil, my servant; he has shot Mr. Tester—killed him; and he has himself committed suicide. On my honour I had no hand in the affair. But he is an Oriental! He acted according to his lights! He must have overheard—" But Evelyn had swooned away.

* * * * *

The following is from the *Times* some sixteen months later.

"At St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, by the Right Rev. the Bishop of London, assisted by the Rev. John Jones, Evelyn, only daughter of the Earl of Purdock, to Richard Gordon, eldest son of the late General Harwood, K.C.B."

J. LE B. MARTIN.

PASSING ACQUAINTANCES.

WHEN I was about thirty years old, I went fishing one day on the banks of the Cher, near Saint-Avertin. It was in the autumn, a little warm, but quite pleasant near the water. I had installed myself in an excellent place. At my feet the brownish-green water wound tranquilly in and out between grassy banks, daisies and field-flowers grew on either side close to the water's edge. I had a long day before me, and no unpleasant neighbours to disturb me in my enjoyable occupation.

I had unhappily reckoned without my host. About three o'clock I saw appear, behind the poplars, a couple who placed themselves on the other side of my rod about ten feet distant.

They were a middle-aged man, and a lady young and very pretty. The gentleman, clean shaven, clothed entirely in black, had a very correct air and a very severe countenance; the lady, in a grey dress and straw capote trimmed with blue ribbons, was blonde, plump, and very lively. They carried a fishing-rod, and the husband made his wife sit down while he adjusted the rod and arranged the bait.

Without appearing to watch them, I soon perceived that they were novices in the art.

"Good!" thought I. "They are amateurs and will not trouble me unless they frighten away the fish with their chattering."

They caught nothing. On the other hand, in less than an hour I had my basket half-full. My neighbours were still unsuccessful. Finally, the young woman, disgusted, threw down her rod and slowly strolled towards me. At the moment she reached me, I landed a large perch, and I took a mean pleasure in leaving him flopping about on the grass before putting him into my basket.

"Oh," cried the young woman, "what a beautiful fish!"

Then, in an insinuating voice, she added:

"Monsieur, how do you catch so many fish while we have not been able to get even a bite?"

I was young then, and, though I was always timid in the presence of women, I was not insensible to a pretty face. I replied, therefore, as gallantly as I could:

"Oh, madam, it is only that you do not understand. To fish with a line is a more difficult art than one thinks. But if you will follow my advice I will show you how to fish. Here, seat yourself, and I will prepare your hook."

I showed my pupil the tricks of the rod, of which she seemed to be entirely ignorant. After a few instructions she did fairly well. The spot was a good one, and the fish allowed themselves to be taken.

At each lucky pull of the line, the little lady laughed like a child, turned towards her husband, who, gravely smiling, seemed very happy in his wife's joy and thanked me with ceremonious politeness.

At last the afternoon waned. About six o'clock we stopped fishing, and I was about to take leave of my companions, when the young woman ran to her husband and whispered to him. He listened with a thoughtful air, evidently a little startled. After a moment I saw them coming towards me, but it was the lady who said to me:

"Monsieur, you have been so kind to us that we cannot leave you in this way. It is owing to your goodness that we have caught these fish, and it is but right that we

should eat them in company. Will you give us the pleasure of dining with us?"

The gentleman added his invitation to that of his wife. They urged me in such a cordial way that I accepted, and we went to Saint-Avertin.

At the "Three Pigeons" the husband asked for a private room and ordered dinner. We were pleasantly served in a room where windows opened wide upon a garden filled with flowers.

The fresh air had sharpened our appetites. Besides our fish we had roast fowl, asparagus, a tart, and Vouvray wine. I was seated at the right of the pretty lady, who laughed constantly, and she did not leave my plate or glass empty for a moment.

The husband was less jovial; he wore a constrained smile, and even the wine did not have the effect of loosening his tongue. At certain moments he seemed almost embarrassed. I had taken upon myself the duty of carving the fowl, and sharpening my knife, I cried gaily:

"Pass the fowl to me, I know how to carve, and I can cut off heads in great style."

I was astonished at the small success of my pleasantry. The husband reddened to his eyes, his wife turned pale, and a dead silence reigned in the room.

They were very reserved about their affairs. I had put adroit questions, because I was anxious to know with whom I had dined, but they answered in a very evasive way. All that I could learn was that they were staying at Tours, and that they lived at Orleans.

When we had taken our coffee, night had fallen and it was time to depart. I had done justice to the repast, and was very gay. Before leaving I thanked them warmly for their hospitality, and declared that I had never enjoyed myself better than in their society. That made the young woman smile, and I cordially extended my hand to her husband, who, after a moment's hesitation, gave me his. I shall never forget the strange sensation I experienced when I grasped that icy hand.

"I hope that we may meet again," I said, "when I may have the pleasure of returning your hospitality."

"I do not believe that," he said, with a singular accent. "We leave Tours to-morrow. Adieu, monsieur."

In fact, I never did meet them again at Saint-Avertin, although I went every Sunday. I often thought with pleasure of the good dinner which I had eaten at the "Three Pigeons."

* * * * *

Three months passed. One day I was exceedingly busy at my desk in the office, when someone entered and presented at the wicket a cheque. In those days we frequently had cheques presented for payment for public services. I took the paper, without looking at the person who handed it in, to my chief to sign. Returning I was curious enough to read it.

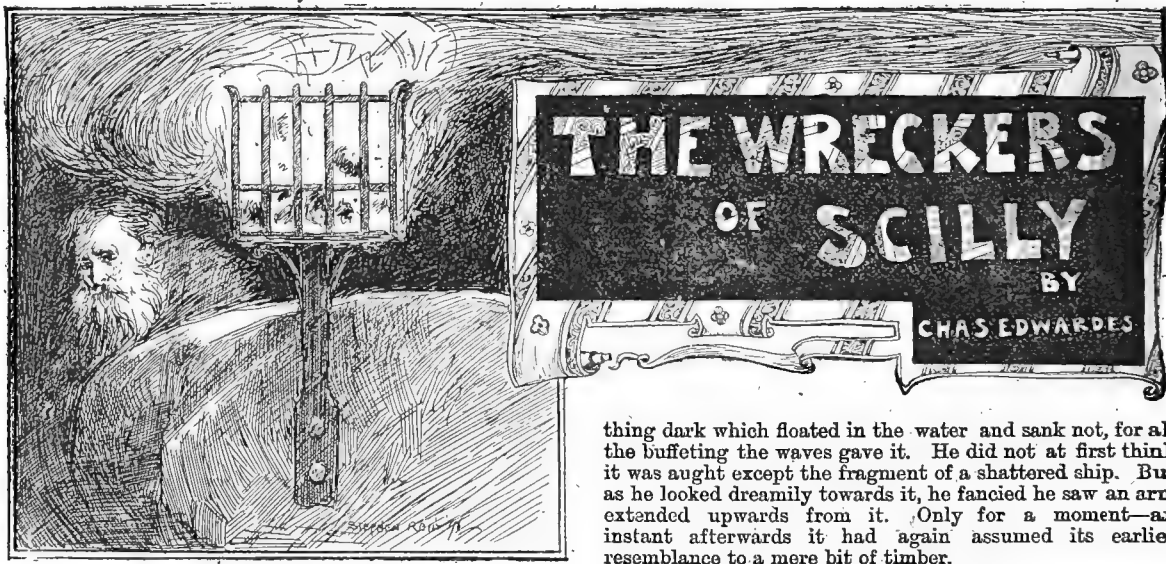
It was an order for three hundred francs to be paid to the bearer M. Bleiger, "High Executioner."

What was my horror when I reached the wicket to recognise in the "high executioner" my host at the "Three Pigeons" and the husband of the pretty lady.

I then remembered that an execution had taken place at Tours the day before my fishing excursion.

I had dined with the headsmen!

A. D.



SUMMARY.

THE scene is laid at St. Agnes, one of the Scilly Islands. The inhabitants live by the booty obtained from vessels wilfully led to destruction by false beacons. The only two exceptions are Nigel Pridenax and Damaris Nance, his sweetheart. Manuel Nance, Damaris' father, is Nigel's greatest enemy. The *King Hal*, a warship laden with Spanish plunder, is lured to destruction, and wrecked off Troy Town.

CHAPTER V.

CAST UP BY THE SEA.

FROM high ground above St. Warna's Bay, Nigel had seen how his fellow-islanders treated the miserable cast-aways from the wrecked ship.

He watched them with gasping breath, and his hands clutched as if he were trying to hold something hard against opposing forces.

Over and over again he ejaculated the words: "By St. Nicholas!" or, "By St. Martin!" and made as if he would leap down the rocks and join the others. It was his uncle who had taught him to think highly of the saint that was held in such great esteem in the French town of Tours.

There was something almost frightful in the expression of his young face, as he looked down upon all this bloodshed in the pale morning radiance. His brows were ribbed like an old man's, and when he was not muttering to himself the words that seemed able to relieve and restrain him, his lips closed tightly with the firmness of one who held mighty duties which he meant to fulfil.

Yet what could he do? Nothing, simply nothing. He had to acknowledge as much to himself; and so, with a sigh, he turned away from the sickening scene, and let his eyes range over such of the sea and the coast-line as was within his vision.

"I will not dwell longer in this accursed isle," he murmured. "If only we twain, and none others, could get from here, then, for aught I should pine about it, the Almighty might overwhelm St. Agnes from Frigilis Bay to the end of the Gugh, even as he did Sodom and Gomorrah. And I misdoubt me if Sodom and Gomorrah at their worst did such deeds as these I have seen this day—with women-folk and children gazing the while too, as if it were a revel. Troth! There must be a sorry reckoning against Manuel Nance in the books of the Archangel—may his daughter's innocence stand in abatement of his eternal doom!"

Thus letting his eyes roam here and there over the surf in the coves, it chanced that anon they were held by some-

thing dark which floated in the water and sank not, for all the buffeting the waves gave it. He did not at first think it was aught except the fragment of a shattered ship. But as he looked dreamily towards it, he fancied he saw an arm extended upwards from it. Only for a moment—an instant afterwards it had again assumed its earlier resemblance to a mere bit of timber.

But this one instant sufficed for Nigel.

"If I may this day save one poor soul from the fate of those others, I will account myself happy, and St. Agnes less sinful," he said impetuously to himself, as he hastened down to the inlet towards which the object was little by little being impelled.

Happily this inlet was quite sheltered from notice by the islanders in the larger bay. The whole headland of Troy Town intervened as a screen.

Nigel's joy was much intensified when, after watching for several minutes, he again saw the thing, this time but a few yards out. He bared his legs quickly that he might rush to it, and wrest it from the water ere another receding wave should delay its landing. Fortune favoured him. A stupendous inrush of the sea lifted the thing high towards the beach; and, at manifest peril to himself, the youth leapt forward, caught it in his arms, and, even thus burdened, resisted the backward sucking of the wave.

It was a man bound to a slab of cork.

There was a recess hard by, just above high-water mark; and thither Nigel carried his booty.

There he laid the body on the stones and examined it. At first he did not doubt the life had gone from it. The lifting of the arm in the water was probably the last effort against the doom that seemed inevitable. The face was so pallid that it argued of death almost as eloquently as a fleshless skeleton.

But Nigel knew better than to be convinced by tokens, even so strong as these. He hastily stripped off the wet doublet from the man's body, careless of the fine lace with which the velvet was fringed. Then he took off his own jacket, and, having stretched the man on the ground where it was smoothest, he alternately gave him what warmth his own warm body could afford by contact, and did his utmost to excite the lungs to revive their operations.

A violent spasm in the man was the first sign of returning vitality. Then Nigel waited with an incredible pleasure. He continued his exertions, and was more delighted than ever when, after a recurrence of these convulsions, the man vomited some sea water, and thus gave his lungs the moving space they demanded.

For half-an-hour the youth did not relax his efforts. By that time Sir Francis Seymour—for it was he—could sit up and ask questions in a weak voice. But Nigel discouraged him from this by at first refusing to answer, and signalling him to be quiet.

After, however, he saw that the life was again growing vigorous in him, he told him briefly and as softly as possible that his eventual safety depended entirely upon his prudence. If he would rest content to obliterate himself for a while, means should be found to transfer him to the island of St. Mary's, if not to Cornwall. Otherwise, he (Nigel) would not answer for his security one hour.

"And the others, good youth?" whispered Sir Francis.

"Are with their Maker, fair sir, or elsewhere."

"Then how—by what chance—"

But here Nigel interposed. Having at length persuaded Sir Francis to his own profit, he drew him yet farther into the inlet, where a small cave ran at right angles to the passage.

"Rest here, in faith, sir, and unless I be impeded I will

The men were meantime collecting as much rope as they could accumulate from their houses, and splicing one piece to another. As for the women, they seemed to have forgotten the scenes of an hour or two ago. They were rinsing their dishes or cutting up potherbs, or feeding their poultry, as if sticking knives in the hearts of shipwrecked men were an everyday affair with their relations. But while they attended to these domestic labours, their tongues wagged loudly about the good things all this gold would bring.

To hear them you would have looked to find in a month or two all their cottages transformed into palaces like that of Westminster, and they themselves clad in silks and lace, with ropes of pearls round their bronzed necks, and each with a jewelled watch pendant from her waist.

"Come, lend thy hand, Nigel," said one of the men,



He laid the body on the stones and examined it.

speedily return with the wherewithal to aid the strength in you."

"I am content," was Sir Francis' reply.

It was, however, no easy task that Nigel Prideaux had undertaken. When he returned to the village he found the men and women in a tumult of excitement. Already an iron-banded box had been cast up by the waves, and the bursting of it had declared the gold pieces with which it was stuffed as tight as the hair in a firm cushion. Moreover, the box had the number "5" painted roughly upon it, which argued an unparalleled amount of plunder eventually for the islanders.

Manuel Nance was issuing orders and restrictions in a sharp tone.

"There must be no idling this morning, good friends. Every man of you has his appointed task. Ha! And thou too, shuffler that thou art, Nigel Prideaux!" he added, catching sight of our friend. "By all the saints, we shall none of us lack money in our purses as long as we live, if we act stoutly."

passing a rope towards another. "'Tis time thou hadst work of some sort on thee."

"Good James," whispered our friend, "spare me for a while. I will be with thee in a trice."

"Go, then, and see what the Captain will say. I dare thee do it."

Nigel himself saw that he was in some difficulty. In spite of the argosy that had come upon St. Agnes, he could mark the animosity of Nance's look towards him. Perhaps it was heightened by a sort of envy of the youth, that he alone of the men had no share in the remorse for the bloodshedding that would some day, if not now, be their portion. More like it was but the old hatred which a bad man at his worst can hardly help feeling for one whose deeds and disposition are good rather than evil.

But the thought of the poor fellow in the cave, doubting what his fate was to be, emboldened him.

"I shall hazard it, come what may," he said to the other, and he passed on towards his own dwelling.

The strident voice of Manuel Nance was, however, upon him ere he had made five steps from the workers.

"Didst hear my words, sirrah, or hast peas in thine ears? Get thee to work."

"I will not evade the task, Master Nance," replied Nigel. "I do but desire a bite of bread."

"Then be quick, thou guzzler. By my faith, we have borne with thine airs and reservances too long. Thou art a very crow among a set of eagles. Gramercy for it."

At this there was a laugh. But Nigel cared not. He entered his cottage at once, and called Ban "the idiot boy."

"For Mistress Nance, Ban, you understand," he said as he took a leaf from a tablet book that was on the shelf, and wrote some words on it.

The lad's dark eyes acquired a gleam of cunning intelligence, as he nodded his head and pushed the tablet under the folds of his doublet.

"Yes, thou catchest my meaning perfectly," added Nigel in response to an inquiring look in the boy's face. "Be shy of Dame Cochran chiefly, and speed thee by the yard door."

Having thus done what he could in aid of Sir Francis, Nigel rejoined the other islanders with as ready an air of goodwill as he could assume. It mattered little that he did what he was able to bring the treasures of the wrecked ship to land. That, at any rate, was no wrong to his conscience.

But it was a difficult business, even with the calming of the sea, as the day drew on towards eventide. Their aim at first had been to tether the ship, to prevent, or at least obstruct, its removal by the tide when this was strongly on the ebb.

This design, however, they abandoned when, from the overhanging rocks, they could see how little of the framework of the vessel remained in its place. The hull

had been torn to pieces, and only the forepart still clung entire to the rocks which had impaled it.

After many trials, however, a cable was made fast between the shore and the ship, to be used as a thoroughfare for the adventurers who dared to get on board the wreck. These, thanks to the subsidence of the wind and tide, were able to descend into the hold, and, after much stumbling and risk they came upon what they held to be the ship's treasure chamber. There were swelling bales of mercery, half or more spoiled by the sea, but still worth removing. Also cases of seeds, and packed leaves which none of them knew for tobacco. But best of all were the boxes of Spanish loot, church ornaments of gold and silver gilt, patens, chalices, and monstrances, some studded with jewels, ill cut, but precious. And with these, in a chamber, in a closet adjacent, were distorted figures of men and monsters, some as tall as an arm, and of solid silver, with coarse streaks of paint on them. Sacks of feather-worked dresses, and shields, spears, bows, arrows, and knives, also decorated with feathers of different colours, were further witness that the *King Hal*, in transshipping the booty of the *Santa Trinidad*, did but deprive the Spaniard of much that she had no claim to except by the right of conquest.

All these valuables were hauled ashore by the cable, and as they were deposited and opened, the women folk greeted them with cries and babblings of delight.

But it was not until evening that more of the gold pieces, which were of the best the *King Hal* could offer to her spoilers, came ashore. With the return of the tide two other boxes showed themselves. These, added to the first, made a barrel full of the coins.

Of the more miscellaneous articles washed up there seemed no end, from empty casks and spars to such trifles as the leathern purses in which the soldiers aboard had kept their silver pieces.

Of corpses, too, there were not a few. These were at once buried in another grave dug by the side of the greater one. It was left open, too, for the sea was not likely to give up all its dead in an hour or two.

The evening of this eventful day closed so fair and serene that it might have seemed as if nature meant to mock the skeleton of the *King Hal*, swaying faintly on the rock that had killed it.

The sea lay like a silver pool, and the black teeth of the islets set in it were like tourmalines embedded in the silver. The sun descended in a coral flush, and for long after its disappearance the lovely twilight lingered over the islands and the silent water.

The plaintive lowing of the St. Agnes kine, and the songs of birds, gave the crowning touch to a scene that appeared all idyllic and innocent.

But the islanders themselves held a carouse when the stars were out that was not wholly in keeping with their fair surroundings.

It was felt by all but two or three that such unexampled good fortune, and such arduous and memorable labours to secure it, deserved to be exceptionally celebrated.



The women folk greeted them with cries of delight.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COMEDY IN THE CAVE.

MEANTIME, little Damaris had been entertaining Sir Francis in the cave under the headland of Troy Town.

When the milking of Mary and Nell had been done, and the cream of the previous day had been set aside for shaking, the girl's thoughts turned afresh to her lover. She had not seen him since they had parted after the salute he had pressed upon her.

Then, as it happened, word ran up to the village of the finding of the gold and other treasures.

Dame Cochran's joy now almost exceeded the bounds of decorum. She ran to and fro, singing snatches of song, and telling briefly how so rare a day's sport recalled the time of her youth, when on one night a whole fleet was wrecked between the Gugh and Annet, and gold was so common that the children played chuck-farthing with the pieces.

"Go to thy chest, wench," she cried, "and get forth thy richest bravery. If ever there was a white-silk day in the calendar, this is one."

Damaris was about to make objection when she saw the idiot boy, Ban, prowling about the fence of wrecked timber which parted the fowl-yard from the garden, in which the potherbs and roots were grown. The old woman also espied him.

"First," she added, "send that loon yelling with a box on the ear. By my troth, 'tis an evil hour when his fool's face was licensed to show where it lists. He and his master are a pair, and a wise man were needed to say which of them is the greater ninny."

"Of that, nurse," said Damaris hotly, "methinks thou art no efficient judge. Even were Nigel Prideaux the fool you term him, 'tis said none but the wise may judge of a fool."

"Saucy thing, go to——"

Damaris needed no further bidding. For she had a thought that Ban might, as at other times, have come with a message for her.

In effect the message was soon and deftly delivered. Though short of wit, the idiot had craft enough. And making a pretence of stooping to see to the hens in their house, the girl read Nigel's lines, and learnt his bidding.

"Of thy courtesy and love, sweetheart, hie thee to the cave with a bend on the Annet side of Troy Town, and take with thee milk and meat for him thou shalt find there. He is, or I am deceived, a man of rank. Thy Nigel was happy enough to save him, but thy father has put it out of my power to do what is still needful for him. *THY NIGEL.*"

With the echo of this injunction in her mind, Damaris now, with maiden eagerness, undid the chest in which her finery was wrapped.

"A white-silk day, thou saidst, sweet nurse! I would not foil thy wishes, and so it shall be a white-silk day."

"Marry, and thou art strangely obedient. It half inclines me to make thee keep to thy stuffs. After all, thou wast not in the making of the day, and it does not beseem thee to flourish as if thou, too, hadst cut men's throats."

"I pray you, nurse, speak not of such deeds. I care not how I be tired."

"A plague on thee, girl. Was ever such a gad-about! Dress thee as I said thou shouldst, and let's have an end on't."

Even the cross, ill-bred old woman could not stay her tongue from admiration when Damaris had duly put on the white silk gown she had taken from the chest. It was puffed at the sleeves with crimson satin, and embroidered in front and across the bosom with silver lace. The girl's heightened colour did but add to her loveliness.

"Well-a-day, well-a-day," sighed the dame. "That Nance should be dad to such a daisy! Get thee gone, child, or I shall be envious of thee. But be shrewd not to mire thy finery."

"That I will, sweet nurse," answered Damaris cheerily.



*He trod
towards
her with
parted
lips.*

She tripped into the dairy on her way out, and hid under the old mantle she threw over her shoulders a pot of new milk and a small cake. Further, she took with her the breast of a capon and a flask of French wine, of which her father had good store.

Then, as fleet of foot as a St. Agnes sheep, she bounded up the slope behind the house, and by a devious path reached the cave.

Here her heart began to beat within her. He was a stranger, and she was a veritable house-bird. What should she say to him; and in what way should she conduct herself to a man of rank? Once, she minded, the steward of the isles had rowed over to St. Agnes, and she had been bidden curtesy low to him, and offer him a posy of flowers from her garden. But that was when she was a barelegged little lass, but twice as old as young Obadiah. She would not curtesy now to any man—except perhaps to Nigel, and that more in merry mockery than from reverence and awe.

But while she stood thus questioning herself near the cave, Sir Francis had set eyes on her.

"Queen of Heaven, what's here?" he ejaculated, and he trod towards her with parted lips.

When she turned to go to him therefore she met his gaze.

"I give you good-day, sir," murmured the girl; "and I have been bidden bring you that which shall keep you from hunger."

"And right welcome it is, fair damsel," said Sir Francis. "Yet the sight of such as thou in such a place is even more abundantly gladdening. I entreat thee—who art

thou? Has Scilly also its Virgin to whom men's knees should bow? By my soul, had I but known it, the worthy ship need not have thus gone to the bottom with all her gold. Thou wouldst have made intercession for us, or I read not mercy and sweet compassion in thine eyes."

"What wouldst have me do, sir?" asked Damaris, looking at the knight with flushed face. She did not entirely comprehend his flatteries, but her maiden instinct bade her be on the alert.

"Art thou of Scilly?"



Damaris moved away with a short curtesy.

"Surely, since both my father and I were born here on St. Agnes."

"Is this then the horrid isle of St. Agnes, where the men live by misdeeds, too foul for thy coral-tipped ears to hear tell of?"

Damaris drew herself up, and looked at the knight. For all his stately air and the spoilt splendour of his dress, she would not hear her birthplace spoken ill of, much though it might deserve it.

"Thou thyself, sir," she said, with panting bosom, "art a witness of our doings. Hadst thou lived to say such things if a St. Agnes youth had not saved thee from the sea that desired thee? There is none nobler nor more comely in all the world than Nigel, and it sits ill with such magnificence as thine to abase us who are thine hosts."

"I cry you mercy, lady," rejoined Sir Francis, now more than ever astonished.

But Damaris interrupted him.

"I am no lady, sir. My father is plain Manuel Nance, of St. Agnes, and I am his daughter. It was sorrowfully done of you to be so ungracious to our Nigel."

"Marry, and how could I have known what wrath I was exciting, pretty wench?"

"How now, sir? I may not be a lady, but neither am I 'pretty wench' for such as thou. My nurse, when she is

sour, may call me that; but I know not you, sir—save that Nigel desired me to tend you."

With a shrug of the shoulders, Sir Francis extended his palms, as if to show the jewelled rings upon his fingers.

"Damsel of St. Agnes, I know not what to say to give thee pleasure. I would fain not show myself ill-bred; but me thinks young Nigel—be he whom he may—has absorbed all the kindness from thy tender heart. For this meat, I give thee cordial thanks; the hands that bore it have sauced it as no French master-cook could. And now, of your charity, maiden, admonish me, if thou canst, how I may arrive at Plymouth. Tell me, too, of my shipmates and men. Are all lost but I? Heaven was under no great compulsion to be so hard to them and kind to me. Enlighten me, that I may have somewhat to think upon in this my melancholy dwelling-place."

The knight's attitude while he spoke had so touching a semblance of distress in it that Damaris's eyes filled with tears.

"Pardon me, fair sir," she replied tremulously. "I am simple-bred and cannot talk aright with gallants. Nigel shall come anon and give thee news. I know not what may happen, but from what they tell me it would be unwise in thee to appear without word from Nigel. And even then"—and she sighed—"I doubt if he could save thee; for between Nigel and the rest there is but scant goodwill, and all because he is of nobler make than they. As touching the other voyagers, I know not, fair sir, save that they lie buried in rows where the grass is saltest."

"May their souls rest in Paradise!" observed Sir Francis mechanically.

"And ours follow them," added the girl. "And now, I pray you, excuse me, sir, and may you break your fast with appetite."

Damaris moved away with a short curtesy. Something in the expression of Sir Francis' face made her feel ill at ease.

But the knight detained her. Even the irksomeness of his temporary confinement in the cave seemed to him as nothing compared to the pleasure the sight of Damaris's beautiful young face and form gave him. An hour ago he was in the humour to throw himself into the Atlantic, and see if a second time he might trifle successfully with it. But now he had forgotten his misfortune. There was that in his heart which told him that Cupid (a divinity with whom he was on good terms) was again domiciled within him. And he welcomed the visitation. For Sir Francis was one of the multitude of men who, surpassingly bold in war, are of very inflammable affections. He was therefore not at all disposed to lose sight of Damaris at all at once, and perhaps for ever.

"I entreat you one moment," he replied, making as if he would half bar the entrance. "Tell me if I may look to be gladdened again by your coming."

"I do not doubt, sir, that Nigel will attend to the needs of thy body," replied Damaris, with a little scorn.

"You misread my meaning. It is thyself I would see again. Thy fair eyes, sweet lips, dear heart, have stricken me to the soul. I could endure the lack of these (pointing to the milk and eatables), but without sight of thy angel face methinks I must surely starve, though Nigel spread me a table daily as fat as the one let down from Heaven for the feeding of the Apostles. Dost take my meaning, beauty?"

The girl had listened with heaving bosom.

"I am not so dull, sir, but I understand something of all thou hast said. Fair sir, be advised. I know not why I should interpose my weak body (though there are weaker ones) behind thee and danger, for thou art stout of arm. But I tell thee if Nigel comes and catches thee saying words like these into mine ear, he will be tempted to befriend thee no more. And what thou wouldst do without him I trow not. For thou surmisest aright, fair sir: they are cutters of gullets and men of stony hearts on this island, and they

allow no tale-bearers to wander where heed may be given to what they say. And so, for thy profit, I conjure thee to look not at me with such eyes, and be less honied in thy language."

"Marry, my pearl, I love thee the better for this homily," exclaimed Sir Francis. "But since thou lovest Nigel, I may e'en put on sackcloth."

"Troth and you may, and say no more about it. But I'll bide no longer, and so farewell."

This time the knight made no offer to detain her, though he followed her with eyes of undisguised admiration.

Nevertheless, he was not to lose her that moment. She reappeared in the cave, with a finger across her lips:

"'Tis Nigel himself," she whispered. "I know his manner of striding by the sound. Beware how thou conductest thyself."

"Incomparable creature——" began the knight, but the youth's coming put a period to the ardent compliment that began to break from his lips.

"Ah! I find you so. It is well," Nigel exclaimed. "And I have this to say, that if thou'rt willing, as doubtless thou art, this very night, two hours after sunset, I will row thee to St. Mary's."

"Thy hand, my bonny Nigel," and to his surprise the knight drew from one of his fingers a sapphire ring, which he put upon the youth's hand. "By the token of this blue stone, know that Sir Francis Seymour will never fail thee and thine at a pinch. Let it be done to-night, in the name of heaven. I weary of this cave. Moreover, worse may come of it, I fear, and of that I'd make confession in the presence of this fair maid who loves thee so."

"I said not that I did," broke in Damaris, with a show of indignation.

"It recks not. 'Tis a matter in which the eyes speak for the heart. But hear me out. I, too, would fain be out of reach of so much beauty, for I come of a hot-blooded race. Dost catch my meaning, good Nigel? I see thou dost. And

Nigel had listened impatiently to this rigmarole, and his discomfort was increased by the smile on the knight's face, and the gradual brightening of the countenance of Damaris. But when the girl turned her gaze upon him he was won to humour the man in his strange speech.

"I am glad, fair sir, to hear thee speak thy mind so candidly," he said. "For the ring I thank thee, though I need it not."

"And I," added Damaris blithely, with an arch look that renewed the knight's passion, "rejoice to think thou art not what I took thee for. There be they, as Scripture tells us, which vaunt of doing right, and go straight and sin; but there be also others who make a pretence of foolishness, and lo! act wisely after all. Your magnificence is not among the fools."

"Come, come, Damaris; they will look for thee at home," interposed Nigel. "Nor was it needful, sweetheart," he added in a whisper, as they went together towards the mouth of the cave, "to deck thyself like a queen for such a ministration."

"It was to do thy bidding, Nigel," she replied, with a proud look that made her match her apparel.

"So then, noble sir, be ready," exhorted the youth, returning to Sir Francis, who had watched this brief confabulation with a touch of bitterness at the heart. "I will not fail thee, except all things be against me."

"And as I live, get me to England, and thou'lt find no surer friend at Court or elsewhere, within his ability, than Sir Francis Seymour."

"I give Sir Francis Seymour generous thanks," said Nigel with a bow. "But if thou hadst been Sir Francis Seymour's scullion, I would not have ventured less than I have to save thy life."

This said, Nigel dallied no longer, but went away to moor his boat somewhat nearer the cave.

(To be continued.)

NEXT WEEK

will appear the opening chapters of a new serial story, entitled,

THE SHADOW HAND,

— By Louis Tracy, —

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A STORY WITHOUT WORDS.

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.....

ON page 214 four sketches are given in their proper order. £5 is offered to the reader who sends us the most appropriate wording to go under each sketch, the whole to form a story descriptive of the illustrations, and £1 will be given to each of the senders of the next best five attempts.

It is not necessary for competitors to have any literary ability. If you have a good idea, surely there should be no difficulty in putting it down in words. The whole of the story is limited to one hundred words, which may be distributed under the sketches according to the judgment of the competitor.

All that you have to do is to write in the order of the sketches the wording that you think most appropriate, enclose your attempt in an envelope (which should be marked "Picture Story"), and forward it to this office before Monday, February 15th.

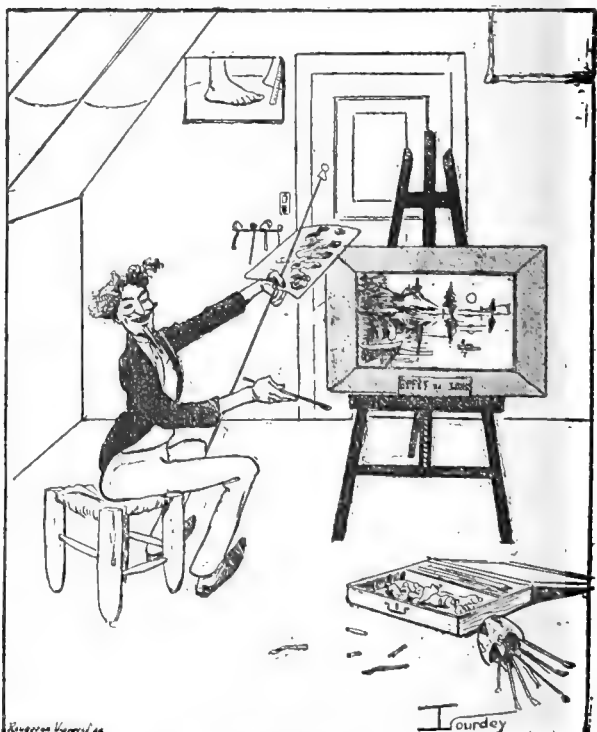


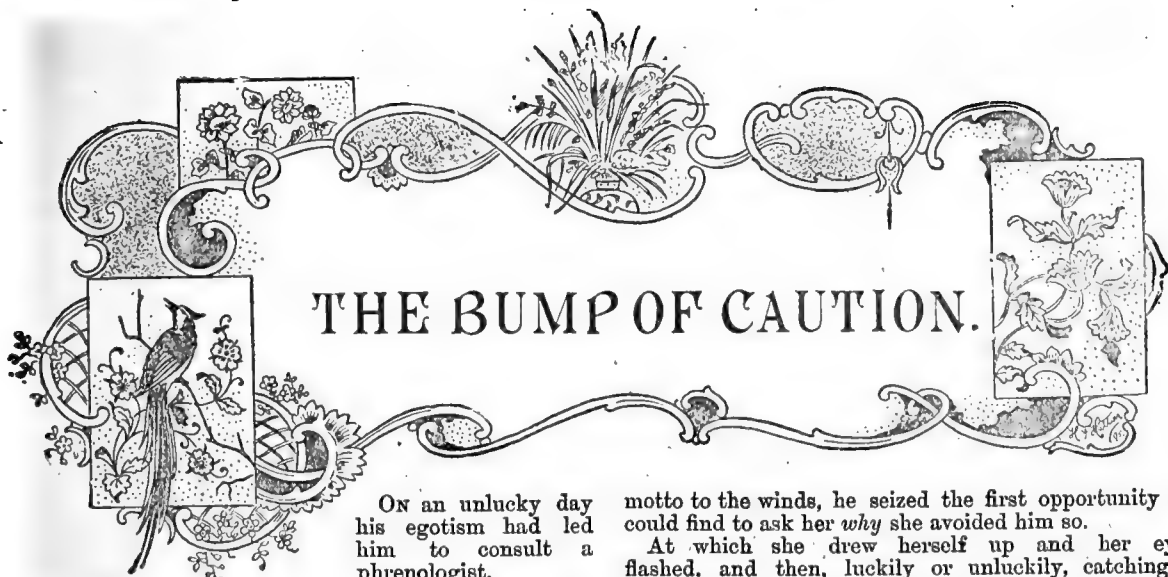
To moor his boat.

so all things conspire to urge thee to get me off thy island without delay. I tremble to think of what might happen didst thou hide me here a week, and daily send me such a victualler. There, I've eased my mind."

A STORY WITHOUT WORDS.—No. 3.

See page 213.





THE BUMP OF CAUTION.

ON an unlucky day his egotism had led him to consult a phrenologist.

He was acutely interested in what he heard, although he thought he had known it all before.

One thing, however, astonished him much—he lacked caution.

Now, caution was a quality he had many times despised in others. Caution and cowardice he used to think fairly synonymous when he had considered the subject at all, which was seldom. Had anyone hinted to him that he was cautious, he would have been highly indignant.

However, when the phrenologist suggested the absence of it, it was as if cold water had been suddenly and unexpectedly thrown over him.

Evidently, from his tone, the phrenologist looked upon the absence of the quality as a serious want.

"Humph!" he ejaculated moodily as he walked home. "Humph!" he ejaculated again in the midst of solitude and tobacco smoke.

Now, he was a very good fellow, there was no question about that, and he was as open-hearted, open-handed a man as ever lived.

It could not be said that no one spoke ill of him, for he had his slanderers, but they were few. His friends were many, and some of them loved him.

"Caution!" he muttered as he threw away the end of a cigar and proceeded to pick out another. "Caution!"

It must be explained to his credit, or discredit, that he was in love—very seriously in love indeed—but he had not yet asked the all-important question which was expected and awaited with unseemly impatience.

"Suppose she only means to make me ridiculous, and a topic for afternoon tea—the sort of thing she's done to poor old —" he thought in the middle of a big puff. "By Jove, I'll not run the risk of that! Forewarned is forearmed. Henceforward 'Caution' will be my motto."

The next time they met his manner struck her as being distinctly chilling, and she froze accordingly.

For days, even weeks, she avoided him pointedly. She flirted desperately with another fellow, to that poor fellow's undoing. At last our would-be cautious friend could stand it no longer, and, throwing his self-imposed

motto to the winds, he seized the first opportunity he could find to ask her *why* she avoided him so.

At which she drew herself up and her eyes flashed, and then, luckily or unluckily, catching a glimpse of the comical side, she burst into a peal of irresistible laughter and left him feeling very small indeed.

However, she avoided him less, and her smile for him had more warmth about it.

He was a man and therefore weak, and his attentions became more marked than ever again.

One evening he came upon her alone in the conservatory, sobbing her very heart out. Forgetting everything he rushed to console her, and, in seeming to fail to do so, he was just on the verge of pouring out his whole heart at her feet when, in his agitation, he grasped his head, unwittingly, but much after the fashion of the operatic tenor. Alas and alack! quick as lightning his brain ran. Head! Bump! Caution! Good Heavens! What a narrow escape!

He rushed and got her a glass of iced water. He meant to tell her one day, of course, for he loved her very dearly, but he wanted to be quite sure about things first. He didn't know what he meant, but that was what he thought. And so, lest he should run into the mouth of danger again, he decided to go away and think it over.

She wondered what had become of him; she neither saw him nor heard from him.

Then someone told her he had gone away, but no one knew where.

He was never seen in any of those eminently civilised quarters of the globe where people go. Where could he be, and why, *why* had he behaved like this, she thought as the weary months dragged themselves, oh, so slowly away.

What was it?—*why* was it? Her woman's instinct had told her so plainly that he loved her. There were prettier girls than she was she knew, but most of them had no brains. He had liked clever women—and then she could boast of being attractive as well. Surely, surely he had not gone away after some mere physical beauty. If so, he would come back to her in the end, she thought. But, oh, how the months dragged! Each one seemed like a year, and as such seemed to add so many years to her age.

She was beginning to look quite old, she thought,

going off dreadfully. Oh, what a blessing! Her brains, at least, were left her.

Then she began feverishly to write a little, then a little more. At last the feverishness subsided somewhat as she began to be more interested and put it into her work.

It soothed her marvellously.

* * * * *

Meanwhile he was spending the months in a little out-of-the-way Breton fishing village, alone, and getting more and more morose each day.

Perhaps she was married, he thought. Oh, very likely. She had probably never cared for him, but was not averse to a little flirtation with a fellow who was not a bad sort of a chap after all. And he drew himself up to his full height and thumped his chest and smiled in a satisfied way.

He was not a prig, oh, dear no! but Caution had brought him to this. A poor, badly used, good fellow he thought himself as he puffed away at his pipe in the seclusion of his bare little tile-floored room in the village inn.

He snapped at people in the most inconsequent way, and the children about were half afraid of him. He had a dog, though, a faithful fellow whom he looked upon as his only friend, and in whose long, expressive, silky ears he unburdened himself from time to time.

After about eleven months had crawled themselves away, and the spring had come round again, his old self began to stir once more.

"We'll go back again to civilisation, old fellow," he said, as "old fellow" yawned very widely up in his face and licked his hand; "we'll go back to town and see what the world looks like. What do you say, eh?"

And "old fellow" wagged his tail and pricked up his ears, and that very day they were off.

The journey seemed interminable. He was all suspense and anxiety mingled. Put her out of his mind he could not, think ill of her he could not; but his gladness at the thought of seeing her, his fear lest—Great Scott! would the journey never end? Why, in Heaven's name, had he come away so far? Why, *why* had he stayed so long?

He paced up and down the floor of his carriage, reviled the slowness of the train, roared at the guard in very bad French, and behaved generally like a savage.

However, there is an end to everything, material at least, so he arrived in London.

He drove like a madman to his chambers, where he had wired his return, changed his clothes, blackguarded his man, and though it was then late in the afternoon, our once so cautious friend rushed off like a fond school-boy to the object of his first affections.

The chilling "not at home" had the effect of a bucket of cold water, and he went down the steps very much like "old fellow" would have done after a sound chastisement.

This frame of mind did not last long, however. When he got back to his rooms he raved at his man again, and behaved in a manner so extraordinary and unusual that his Solomon-like and forbearing servant humbly suggested he might be hungry, and behold! like mists before the sun, suspicion and bad temper vanished. A-a-h, yes. He would dine.

Then he wrote and asked her when he might call.

At last her answer came.

* * * * *

She met him without the least change of colour, and her slim hand was held out with a friendly good-fellowship air about it.

He had expected her to be different somehow. He had pictured her blushing under his look and a general sort of tremulous, shy gladness at his return after so long.

From her manner they might have parted yesterday.

He was far more disconcerted. She was certainly prettier, though, he thought.

She was politely inquisitive as to what he had done. His hand trembled so that he could hardly hold his cup. She chatted away about people they both knew, and laughed merrily now and then. He tried very hard to laugh, but somehow he could not. Something seemed to be gripping his throat. He became conscious that he must be staying a very long time. He had made up his mind to speak, but, somehow, nothing seemed in any way to lead up to it, and she was so dreadfully matter-of-fact.

But he could not bear the suspense any longer.

"Do you—do you—" he stammered.

She held out her hand for his cup. "Do I mind giving you another cup of tea?" she smiled, affecting to help him out.

"Do you care for me at all?" he blurted out desperately.

"Care for you!" she echoed, her eyes and voice expressing blank surprise.

"I love you so much!"

She raised her eyebrows incredulously. His desperation and the awful suspense made him blind to these telling details.

"Yes, I love you, and I have loved you so long. If you knew how I am suffering, you would not keep me in this suspense." He would have taken her in his arms, but she waved him slowly back.

He was frozen.

"I will not keep you in suspense," she answered in a low voice. "I do not love you—I loved you once," she continued, growing more earnest and speaking rapidly, "loved you as I think never to love again, and you—well," with a bitter little laugh, "you didn't appreciate it, to say the least; so after a good deal of trouble I've cured myself, and nothing in the world will ever bring it back—no, not even your thoughtfulness in returning to me after a year!"

Her eyes were blazing scornfully now. "Do you see these papers?" with a little wave of the hand. "I am beginning to work! I am in love with *that* now, and have no room for any other. I am sorry," she added, her tone softening as she caught sight of an expression of awful pain in his face. "I am sorry if you are suffering, for you have made me suffer, and I have known what it is to feel for many months what you are feeling now. You were forgiven some time ago. Will you forgive me now?"

"Yes," he said brokenly, "for, God help me, I have brought it on myself."

"Work," she said to him earnestly, "and you will find what I have found—peace—the best of all."

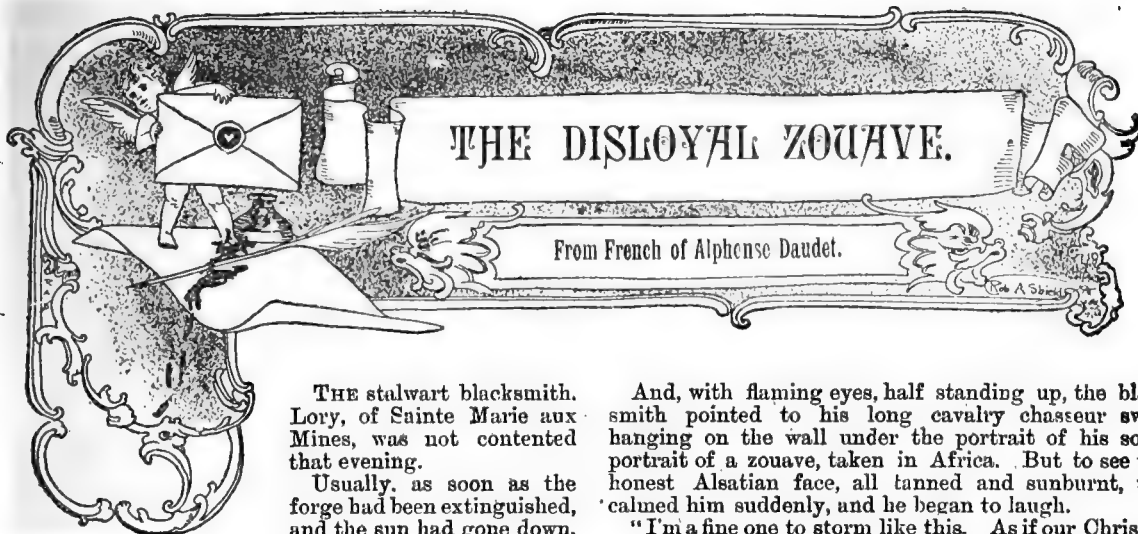
When she was alone a lump came into her throat and she could work no more that day.

M. K.

ASTERISK LETTER COMPETITION.

On page 197 will be found a sentence in which the central letters of each word have been dropped, and an asterisk substituted.

Two guineas will be given to the reader who sends in on the back of a post-card the paragraph which most closely resembles the original. All attempts must reach this office by Monday, February 15th.



THE DISLOYAL ZOUAVE.

From French of Alphonse Daudet.

THE stalwart blacksmith, Lory, of Sainte Marie aux Mines, was not contented that evening.

Usually, as soon as the forge had been extinguished, and the sun had gone down, he sat on the bench in

front of his door, and enjoyed that comfortable lassitude which results from hard work and the heat of the day; and before sending the apprentices home he drank one or two long draughts of Irish beer with them, while superintending the departure of the fabrics. This evening, however, the good man stayed in his forge until it was time to sit down to supper. Then he again returned to it as if with regret.

Old Lory's wife was thinking as she watched her husband: "What has happened to him? . . . Has he, perhaps, had bad news from the regiment, which he will not tell me? . . . Perhaps my eldest son is ill. . . ."

But she did not dare ask anything, and only occupied herself in silencing the three little fair-haired children, who, laughing round the tablecloth, were devouring a good salad of black radishes *à la crème*.

At last the blacksmith, pushing his napkin away in anger, exclaimed:

"Ah, the cowards, the wretches!"

"Of whom are you speaking, Lory?"

He fired up with anger.

"I am speaking," said he, "of five or six scoundrels whom I have seen since this morning lounging about the town, dressed as French soldiers, arm-in-arm with the Bavarians. They are again those who have—what do they call it?—sacrificed themselves for the nationality of Prussia. And that every day we should see these untrue Alsatians return!"

The mother tried to defend them.

"What do you want, my poor husband? It is not altogether their fault. Algeria, where they are sent, is so far! They are homesick over there, and the temptation of returning is very strong—not to be a soldier any more."

Lory gave the table a great thump with his fist

"Be quiet, mother! You mothers—you women—you understand nothing. Forced to live always with the children and living solely for them, you repeat altogether their babblings. Ah, well! I tell you that those men are blackguards, renegades, the worst of all cowards, and if by ill luck our Christian were capable of such infamy, as sure as my name is George Lory and that I have served seven years in the Chasseurs of France, I would pass my sabre through his body."

And, with flaming eyes, half standing up, the blacksmith pointed to his long cavalry chasseur sword hanging on the wall under the portrait of his son, a portrait of a zouave, taken in Africa. But to see that honest Alsatian face, all tanned and sunburnt, that calmed him suddenly, and he began to laugh.

"I'm a fine one to storm like this. As if our Christian could think of becoming a Prussian; he, who has said so much against them during the war!"

Put in a good humour by this idea, the blacksmith succeeded in dining gaily and soon after went to empty a couple of tankards at the "City of Strassburg."

Now old Madame Lory was alone. After having put her three little children to bed, who one could hear murmuring in the next room, like a nest settling to sleep, she took her work and sat darning in front of the door by the garden.

From time to time she sighed and thought to herself: "Yes, I only wish it. They are cowards—renegades. No matter! Their mothers are very happy to see them again."

She recalled the time when her son, before leaving for the army, was there, at that same hour of the day, in the midst of looking after the little garden. She looked at the well where he came to re-fill his water-cans in his blouse, his long hair, those bonnie curls which they cut when he entered the zouaves.

Suddenly she started. The little gate at the bottom, that one which led to the fields, was opened. The dogs did not bark, although he who had just entered crept along the wall like a robber, gliding between the hives.

"Good-day, mother!"

Her Christian was at last before her in his uniform, his breast uncovered, ashamed, troubled, his speech thick. The miserable one had returned to his country with the others, and during the last hour he had prowled round the house, waiting for the departure of his father, in order to enter.

She tried to scold him, but she had not the courage. It was so long since she had seen him. She embraced him! Then he gave her such good reasons—that he had longed for his home, the forge; to live always far from them, amid that discipline, had become so hard, and his comrades called him "Prussian" on account of his Alsatian accent. Everything he said she believed; she only had to look at him to believe.

Still talking, they entered the room below. The little ones, awakened, ran down, with their feet bare, in nightdresses, to embrace their big brother. They tried to make him eat, but he was not hungry. He was only thirsty—always thirsty—and he drank great gulps of

water on the top of the beer and white wine which he had had since morning at the *cabaret*.

But listen! somebody was walking in the court. The blacksmith had returned!

"Christian, here comes your father! Quick! hide yourself, so that I may have time to talk to him—explain to him——" And she pushed him behind the earthenware stove, then began to sew afresh, her hands trembling.

By ill-luck, the zouave shakko was on the table, and it was the first thing that Lory saw on entering. The paleness of the mother, her embarrassment—he understood all.

"Christian is here!" said he in a terrible voice, and, taking down his sabre with a mad gesture, he threw himself towards the stove where the zouave was cowering, pale and sobered, leaning against the wall, for fear of falling.

The mother threw herself between them.

"Lory! Lory! don't kill him! It was I who wrote and told him to come back again, that you needed him at the forge."

She clung to his arm, dragged him, and sobbed.

In the darkness of their room the children were crying to hear those voices so full of anger and tears, so full of bitterness that they did recognise them again. The blacksmith stopped and looked at his wife: "Ah! It was you who made him return. Good, let him go to bed. I will see to-morrow what is to be done."

The next day Christian, waking from a heavy sleep full of nightmares and causeless terrors, found himself in the room of his childhood. The sun, already hot and high, streamed through the little panes of glass framed with lead, crossed by the hop-flowers. Below, the hammer rang on the anvil. His mother was sitting by his pillow. She had not left him the whole night, so much anger on the part of her husband had frightened her.

The old man had not been to bed either. He had been walking about the house till morning, crying, sighing, opening and shutting cupboards. He entered his son's room, gravely, as if for a journey, with his high leggings, large hat, and his solid mountain staff with its spiked end. He advanced straight to the bed: "Well, get up!—dress yourself."

The boy, a little confused, wished to take his zouave uniform.

"No, not those," said the father severely. Then the mother, quite afraid, said:

"But, my husband, he has no others."

"Give him mine, I—I have no more need for them."

While the boy dressed himself, Lory folded the uniform carefully, the little vest, the large red trousers, and, the parcel finished, he passed the cord of the case containing a road map round his neck.

"Let us now go down," said he at last, and all three descended to the forge without a word. The bellows were roaring. Everyone was at work. On seeing the shed quite open, the zouave recollected his childhood. How he had played there so long, between the heat of the road and the sparks of the forge, quite brilliant in the black dust. An access of tenderness seized him, a great desire to have his father's pardon; but on lifting his eyes, the same memorable look met them.

At last the smith decided to speak: "Boy," said he, "there are the tools, the anvil—everything is yours—and all that also!" he continued, pointing to the little garden bathed in the sunlight and full of bees, which was framed in the scented porch. "The bee-hives, the vine,

the house, all belongs to you. As you have sacrificed your honour for these things, the least you can do is to look after them. You are master here. I am going. You owe five years to France, I am going to pay them for you."

"Lory, Lory, where are you going?" cried the poor woman.

But the blacksmith had already gone, walking quickly without turning.

There has been, for some few days, in Sidi-bel-Abbe's, at the depôt of the 3rd Zouaves, a re-engaged volunteer of about fifty-five years of age.

A COMEDY OF ERRORS

is included in the second part of *Pearson's Shakespeare*, the first number of which was issued on Thursday, February 4th. It is profusely illustrated with sketches drawn expressly for the volume by SIR J. GILBERT, R.A., and the illustrations are considered to form the great work of his life.

Pearson's Shakespeare will be published in thirty weekly parts, each part consisting of eighty pages and costing 6d.

If you appreciate a work of art of this sort, put at once with your newsagent an order for the complete set, and he will deliver them regularly every week without any trouble to yourself.

RESULT OF JUMBLE STORY.

No. 28.

THE BEST THING TO DO.

THE KEY.

12	55	11	121	51	101	115	102	82
19	122	5	32	84	83	45	111	50
26	3	24	54	86	113	78	92	13
10	1	15	27	20	107	77	118	124
42	8	52	18	95	71	127	110	106
46	75	93	65	125	117	60	81	41
85	21	57	73	74	70	36	109	66
64	22	28	40	91	126	37	116	119
35	30	38	14	25	104	76	89	
61	6	128	87	34	69	58	120	
105	33	4	88	90	99	108	31	
62	23	16	112	100	97	67	48	
68	39	114	63	94	9	59	49	
98	7	42	44	96	80	79	123	
2	29	72	56	103	53	47	17	

£2 has gone to Ireland, and the remaining £8 is divided among the following competitors, all of whom were correct:

M. A. Gill, 35, Newlyn Road, Lordship Lane, Bruce Grove, Tottenham.

A. B. MacLachlan, 4, Mildenhall Road, Clapton.

J. Burton, 102, Glenpacke Road, Forest Gate.

Miss Barrand, 13, Oriental Place, Brighton.

G. F. Hill, 83, Anderton Road, Sparbrook, Birmingham.

Mrs. E. A. Holland, 46, Clapton Road, Peckham.

W. H. Fitzgerald, 9, Oudine Road, East Dulwich.

M. E. Burns, The Mall, Sligo, Ireland.



THE QUEEN AGAINST OWEN

BY
Allen Upward

Author of "Secrets of the Courts of Europe," "The Prince of Balkistan," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XII. THE C.C.R.

THE Court for Crown Cases Reserved is a modern institution, whose workings are not always quite understood by the public.

In every case which is tried before a jury there are two questions to be decided. The first is whether the evidence produced by the plaintiff alone is sufficient in point of law to justify a verdict. The second is whether the balance of evidence at the end of the trial is in favour of the plaintiff or the defendant.

The first of these questions is for the judge, the second for the jury. From the verdict of the jury there is, strictly speaking, no appeal. From the decision of the judge an appeal may be carried right up to the House of Lords.

But in criminal cases, where the Queen is treated as plaintiff, there was anciently no such method of reviewing the judge's decision. Now a special court has been established, embracing all the common law judges of the High Court, who sit in a body to decide these questions. It was to this tribunal that Tressamer had intended to resort.

But though the prisoner's legal advisers, both her former and her present one, looked to this court for their client's deliverance from the extreme penalty of the law, the general public turned to a very different remedy, that of agitation, to be exerted upon a very different authority—an impressionable politician in the Home Office.

Up to the hour of her conviction public opinion had run

strongly against Eleanor. Whether this was deliberately aimed at by Tressamer or not, it was the consequence of the policy adopted by him. But no sooner had the law pronounced her doom than the tide turned with startling rapidity, and a gigantic agitation was at once set on foot for a reprieve.

Clergymen of mild manners and susceptible hearts went round canvassing their parishioners for signatures to petitions. Legal gentlemen, whose practice did not yet correspond to their own opinion of their deserts, rushed into print with gratuitous opinions on the evidence and the various points in the case. Newspaper reporters, sensitively alive to the first symptoms of a "boom," wrote up the tragic situation with graphic pens. They described the youth and beauty of the prisoner, her gentle bringing up, her desolate condition. Even her relations with the counsel for the defence, of which some inkling had transpired, were freely glanced at, and the reader was invited to sympathise with the despair of the lover as well as of the beloved.

Then the illustrated journals took it up. They had already given pictures of the scene of the crime, of the deceased, and of other characters, including the prisoner. But they now threw away the blocks representing Eleanor, and which had originally done service in America, where they represented a female temperance lecturer of moderate attractiveness, and came out with full-page illustrations, taken in one case from the portrait of the most charming actress on the Parisian stage, and all calculated to feed the growing flame of sympathy with the victim of what was now boldly referred to as a "miscarriage of justice."

The sporting fraternity, too, rallied round Eleanor almost to a man. A tremendous number of wagers had been made as to her fate, and those whose success was involved in her escape neglected no means of bringing about the desired end. And as public sentiment has not yet sunk quite so low as to tolerate petitions and meetings against clemency, the natural effect of all this was to make it appear that the suffrages of the whole community were on one side.

Even the jurymen began to repent their verdict. Several of them allowed themselves to be interviewed by pressmen, and went so far as to state that they had given their

verdict with much misgiving, and hoped that a commutation of sentence would follow.

Petitions flowed in upon the Home Secretary. Meetings were held, not only in Porthstone and the neighbouring towns, but all over the country. Finally the excitement culminated in a monster meeting in London itself, in one of the largest public halls of the Metropolis, at which the chair was taken by a nobleman, and the speakers included a canon of the Church of England, a Roman cardinal, a leading light of the Wesleyan denomination, a major-general (on half-pay), and an ex-colonial judge.

The office of Home Secretary happened to be held at this time by an experienced member of the legal profession, and it is well-known that trained lawyers are far more cautious in condemning, and usually milder in punishing, than laymen. The Home Secretary wavered. He sent for the judge who had presided at the trial, and Sir Daniel Buller, who had had time to recover from his little pique against the prisoner's counsel, infused his own doubt into the Home Secretary's mind.

At last the Minister issued a decision. It was a thorough specimen of the not-guilty-but-don't-do-it-again order of judgment. It stated that the Home Secretary saw no reason to doubt the substantial guilt of Eleanor Owen, but that as, in his opinion, the evidence was of an imperfect character, and failed to throw a clear light upon all the circumstances of the case, including the motive for the crime, he had advised Her Majesty to commute the sentence to one of imprisonment for life.

The very day that this unsatisfactory announcement appeared, thirteen judges sat side by side at the Royal Law Courts to consider the point reserved.

Charles Prescott represented the prisoner. If the judges felt any surprise at this change of sides they were careful not to express it. Young Mr. Pollard appeared on behalf of the Crown, but he was led by the great Appleby, Q.C., and, as a matter of fact, was not allowed to open his lips once during the proceedings.

Prescott's argument was long and elaborate. A crowded bar were present to hear the celebrated case, and the feeling was universal among them that he had never shone so conspicuously on any former occasion. He took up the history of the law of murder from its earliest stages, and along with it he traced the gradual evolution of circumstantial evidence. He showed with what suspicion and reluctance the latter had been gradually admitted into our courts, and how succeeding judges had been careful to fence it in and restrain its application. Then he turned to the particular rule of law which Tressamer had relied on in the Assize Court, and repeated and emphasised the arguments made use of by him. He wound up with an impressive appeal to the judges to lean in the prisoner's

favour, reminding them of the old maxim that a statute must be construed in favour of life, and asking them to apply the same principle in expounding the common law.

Then Appleby, Q.C., addressed the court. In reply to Prescott's last observations he said that imperfection of evidence was a good ground for commutation of sentence, but none for releasing the prisoner altogether. This was, of course, a reminder to the judges of the Home Secretary's decision, announced that morning. Then he proceeded to argue the case on general lines.

He began by stigmatising Hale's precept as a mere piece of advice to juries rather than a maxim of law. He went on to say:

"The most serious difficulty in following this rule is to know how far to apply it. How much of the deceased's body is it necessary to produce in order to justify a conviction? If the head had been discovered, surely my learned friend would not venture to argue that that was not sufficient. It seems clear that it must be a question of fact in each case, and a question of fact is eminently one for the jury, and where they are satisfied that a death has taken place, it would be the height of folly for their verdict to be

set aside because there was not exactly what would enable a coroner to hold an inquest.

"In the present case, however, as a matter of fact, an inquest has been held. The proceedings have gone on all along on the assumption which every reasonable man must have formed, namely, that the body of the deceased had been committed to the waves. To set aside the conviction under such circumstances is simply to encourage crime, and to hold out a guarantee of safety to every murderer who will take a little trouble to conceal the remains of his victim."

When Appleby had finished, Prescott made a brief reply. He confined himself to saying that this was a case of interpreting the law, and not of framing it anew on the ground of expediency. But, he

added, even if the court had to decide without reference to authority, he should still be prepared to urge that the danger of convicting one innocent person must always outweigh that of granting immunity to any number of felons; and he reminded their lordships how very rarely such a circumstance as the present occurred in actual experience.

When the judges came to give their opinions it was at once evident that the court was divided. In accordance with old etiquette, the youngest judge delivered himself first, and he, with some hesitation, declared in favour of the prisoner. But the next three all took the opposite side, and did so with great firmness. After them came another who supported Prescott's view, and then one who sided against him. Sir Daniel Buller repeated his decision at the trial, and Sir John Wiseman dwelt with elaboration



Beygel Prescott
to take her to a
seat.

on the reasons which swayed his cautious mind to the opposite view.

But the member of the court who was listened to with most attention by his brethren was Sir Stephen James, who had made a European reputation by his studies in criminal law. His works on the subject were in every library, and his mere dictum carried almost as much weight as a decided case. When it began to be evident that he was going in the prisoner's favour, Prescott took courage again.

His Lordship's decision was brief and to the point.

"When I am asked to apply a rule of law to a state of facts," he said, "and it appears doubtful whether or no the facts are included in the strict wording of the rule, I think it rational to look behind the words to the meaning, and to ask whether the reason for the rule applies with equal force to the facts now before me. Now, the reason I am able to discover for Sir Matthew Hale's rule is the danger of condemning anyone on a capital charge when you cannot be quite sure that a capital crime has been committed. It is no use to say to me that the jury believe this, that, or the other. The jury may believe it will be a fine day to-morrow, but that does not justify me in condemning a man to death on the assumption that it will be a fine day. The question is whether the jury are justified in coming to their verdict by cogent and decisive evidence. In this case I can see nothing of the sort. An eccentric old lady, with a mania for hoarding jewels, has disappeared in the night, carrying her jewels with her. A hand, identified as hers, because of the rings on it, was found on the beach next day. On those grounds, practically, we are asked to say that she is dead. I can only say that I decline to come to any such conclusion, and, furthermore, I am quite satisfied that if Sir Matthew Hale were sitting on this bench to-day he would be in favour of quashing this conviction."

Two other judges at once subscribed this judgment, and finally, when all but the Chief Justice had spoken, it appeared that the court, so far, was evenly divided, and that Lord Christobel held the fate of the prisoner in his hands.

Possibly his Lordship was not ill-pleased at this. He was a past master of dramatic effect, and in his hands the ancient dignity of Lord Chief Justice of England lost nothing of its imposing character. It may be added that it lost nothing of that higher dignity conferred upon it by the Gascoignes of another age. Lord Christobel had shown on more than one occasion that all ranks, even the highest, were equal in the eye of the law as administered by him. He was the scourge of truckling magistrates, and a thorn in the side of those petty tyrants whom our peculiar system allows to flourish in rural districts in the degraded robes of justice.

He did not long keep the court in suspense. In a gracefully-worded judgment he endorsed the arguments of the prisoner's counsel, and pronounced the conviction of Eleanor Owen to be void in law. The prisoner was to be discharged forthwith.

Hardly did Prescott wait for the closing words of the judgment before rushing out to the telegraph office at the entrance to the Law Courts, and despatching a message to Eleanor, who was still in Abertaff gaol.

He followed this up by thrusting a few things into a bag, catching a cheque, and hurrying to Paddington, where he caught an express for the county town.

Within four hours he was in Eleanor's presence. She had waited for him in the prison, and now put on some outdoor things. He led her to the door, where the governor took a courteous leave of them, and they passed through the gates.

When she found herself for the first time in the open air, Eleanor's limbs shook beneath her. She looked wildly round, as if fearing to behold some disagreeable object, and then begged Prescott to take her to a seat.

They had emerged into a wide, dirty street, formed by the prison wall on one side and a row of shabby little houses and

shops on the other. A few boys were playing marbles on the path, and Eleanor never saw the game afterwards without remembering that evening.

The sun was about to set as they took their way by the quietest route to a little public garden in the neighbourhood, where was a grass plot and some seats. There they stopped, and sat down for a short time to decide on Eleanor's future steps.

Eleanor's first words fell heavily on the ears of her companion.

"I almost wish myself back again. Where am I to go now?" And she shivered slightly.

"Oh, Eleanor, don't say that! To-night you must go to some hotel in the town, but to-morrow we will go up to town together, and I will find you lodgings for a time."

She turned and looked at him sorrowfully, not reproachfully, and shook her head.

"No, no. You forget what I said to you before. I have accepted your friendship, and I need not tell you how grateful I am for it, and for your efforts in obtaining my release. But I am still where I was, as far as the world is concerned. They will go on believing me guilty, and while they do I cannot let you associate with me."

"Oh, why not? Surely you know by this time what you are to me? Need I tell you, Eleanor——"

She put up her hand.

"Hush, Charles!"

The word sent a thrill through him. He looked round. Some children were engrossed in a game a hundred yards and more away. The sunlight was fading from gold to crimson across the roofs and chimneys beyond. The whole scene was still and Sabbath-like. A great peace seemed to speak to him, and bid him take courage and hope for better things. He turned again to Eleanor.

"Thank you," he said, in acknowledgment of her tacit confession. "But oh! if I am satisfied, what need you care for others? Listen: I have some money—more than enough to keep us for some years. We will go to Australia, where they have not heard of us; or, if they have, we will change our names. I can join the bar there, and do as well as here. Are you not my only happiness? What are other things compared to that?"

Again she looked at him sorrowfully. Again she shook her head. Then she turned and gazed into the green and crimson of the sunset while she spoke.

"You would not speak like that if you knew me. Do you suppose I have not thought of all these things during my weary prison hours? I have done nothing else since I saw you, since I saw you and knew you loved me, Charles. But I must be strong where you are weak. I must decide in this matter without heeding your wishes. I must decide as your mother would, if you asked her. Would she wish you to marry a convicted murderess? I have to speak plainly, because I want you to understand me at once, Charles, and spare me the pain of further talk like this. I shall go to London by myself, and I shall let you have my address on the strict condition that you are never to come and see me till my character stands clear again. You may write to me sometimes, not often, but if you break the condition and come to me, I shall move somewhere else and hide myself from you altogether. Now let us go and find a hotel for me, different from yours."

She made a movement to rise. Charles looked round once more. The children had finished their game and disappeared. The brilliancy of the sunset was dropping into dusk and grey. They were alone in the twilight, beneath the faded trees.

"Eleanor, one pledge that you will not forsake me!"

She turned. Their eyes met; then their lips. The silent, close embrace lasted but a minute, though to both of them it seemed longer than the whole of their previous life. Then they arose and went forth out of their poor paradise, like Adam and Eve, with the world lying empty and desolate in front of them.

CHAPTER II.

UNDER THE GREAT SEAL.

SHORTLY after Prescott had returned to town, he was surprised to get a letter from Tressamer to this effect:

"I want you to give me Eleanor's address. I must see her once more, as I have something of importance to say to her."

Without an instant's hesitation, he sat down and wrote an answer, in which he said:

"You have no further claim on my friendship, nor on Miss Owen's. Fortunately, she is now under my protection, and in a place where you are not likely to find her. Do not expect for one moment that I shall do anything to bring her again within the reach of your dangerous character. Only the memory of your old kindness restrains me from writing in a very much stronger way. I am sorry that I must ask you never to hold communication with me again."

Meanwhile Prescott had been doing his utmost to obtain some further light upon the mystery. But neither his inquiries, nor those of the skilled detective, whom he sent down at his own expense to investigate, had resulted so far in finding the smallest clue to what had happened on the night of the first of June.

He had not seen Eleanor since they parted at Abertaff. He now received a letter from her, in which she fulfilled her promise of letting him know her address. But her letter was so despondent, and showed her to feel her situation so deeply, that Prescott was greatly shocked and grieved.

Two days after he was roused by seeing in the papers this announcement:

"THE PORTHSTONE MURDER: DISCOVERY OF THE LOST JEWELS.—Last night, while dragging for fish along the shore of Newton Bay, some fishermen brought to land in their net a chest which had evidently been in the water some time. On being opened, it was found to be full of valuable gems. The police were at once communicated with, it being supposed that they were those missing since the night of the murder. They sent for Mr. Lewis, but as he was unable to speak to their identity, Mr. Williams, of Abertaff, who had supplied deceased with jewellery, was wired for, and he came down by the next train and identified the contents of the chest as the missing jewels. It will be remembered that a part of the body was discovered at or about the same place."

"The importance of the discovery is in negating the theory that the crime was committed for the sake of robbery. But it cannot be said that the mystery which has enshrouded this murder from first to last is in any degree dispelled by this new incident."

While Prescott was still pondering over this discovery, and its bearing on the position of Eleanor and the facts in the case, he received a second letter from Tressamer.

His first impulse was to return it unopened, but he thought this might be doing an injustice, as the letter might contain some explanation, though hardly any excuse for his strange conduct. He therefore opened it.

The letter was a long one, taking up many sheets of paper. After the opening words, it went on:

"I know not what opinion you have formed of me and of my conduct towards Eleanor Owen. Neither do I write in any hope of excusing myself. I am past that now, and I shall soon be past the reach of your anger and of hers."

"Let me begin at the beginning. You remember our childhood, and you know, none better, the bonds between Eleanor and myself. But you do not know that, as children, we were united by those pledges which children sometimes make in imitation of the serious engagements of later life. Of course, as we grew older that passed more or less out of sight, but the memory of it remained—at least, with me."

"I think it was you who first came between us, even at that early age. I used to think she liked you better than me. But why dwell on these things? Let me come on to

a later time, the time of her father's death, when I had passed into manhood, and she was passing into young womanhood.

"That was my first opportunity of showing her my devotion, and I did so. I paid off her father's debts, and by the time I had settled everything, and handed over a little sum to her, I had spent some hundreds of pounds of my own."

"Eleanor was grateful. Whether she had any warmer feeling for me at that time, I cannot say. But I thought then that she had, and that she returned my love—not in the degree that I gave it; no, that could not be. Still, the pleasure she took in my company, the trust with which she seemed to lean on me, certainly filled me with the hope of some day winning her."

"I went to work cautiously. I dreaded her being afraid of my passion if I let her see its whole force. I never did. I chained it up when I was with her, and played a mild and cheerful part. I had my reward. At last, the Christmas after her father's death, I ventured to speak. She heard me with no delight, but yet, it seemed, with no great repugnance. Time soon reconciled her to the idea, and before long I had the rapture of hearing her consent to be mine."

"Then it was that I betrayed myself. I let my mad passion peep forth for an instant, and in that instant I was undone. I saw I had terrified and shocked her. I would have given worlds to recall that volcanic outburst, but it was too late. Her feelings, mild hitherto, were soured by the lightning of my intense love. From that hour she turned from me with deeper and deeper aversion, and from that hour my passion grew and grew upon me with the force of mania, till it usurped the functions of reason, morality, prudence, and every motive that guides and controls the life of man, and left me with but one dominating, desperate idea, that I must possess Eleanor Owen or perish."

"I need not dwell on what happened during the next year. How I saw her turning from me with a sickening heart, how I hungered for the tokens of even that mild friendship she had shown me of old, and how even that was denied; how I brooded upon my wrongs till I scarce knew whether I loved or hated her, whether it was passion or revenge that inspired my mad resolve to kill her rather than forfeit my right to her."

"You, yes, you came between us again. God help me! I sometimes think she must have loved you all along, unconsciously. She asked me for your portrait; I refused. She persisted. Then my wrath broke out in an ungovernable transport of jealousy, and I showed—I must have shown—something of the black stuff that was working in my heart. I saw her lose colour. I saw her tremble, and I rushed away to calm myself if I could."

"From that moment I could see that all friendly feeling was at an end between us. She hated me and I hated her; but I would not give her up. The very animosity between us seemed only to feed my fierce desire to have her and make her my slave. Am I writing wildly? Do you start back and shudder at all this? Go on; you have not yet come to a glimmering of the worst!"

"I began to grow impatient for a final end to this state of things, and I pressed her to name a day for the marriage. She replied, putting me off. I went down by the next train to have it out with her. And then at last we spoke freely."

"I accused her of having ceased to love me. She said she had never really felt love for me, but only affection, and that I had extinguished that by my own behaviour."

"I asked her what behaviour. She was silent. Then the flood-gates of my wrath broke loose, and I put all my weakness and wickedness before her. Ah, how I spoke! You may think you have heard me eloquent. But you never have. I was that afternoon as one inspired. I stood there on the bare sands alone with her, with the wind rushing past us and the sea roaring in front and the wild seabirds

EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS IN THE TREATMENT OF OBESITY.

OUR corpulent readers will be glad to learn how to positively lose two stone in about a month with the greatest possible benefit in health, strength and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular paradox that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state, with increased activity of brain, digestive and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto, yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight 1lb. to 2lb. daily, as the weighing-machine will prove. Thus there is no suggestion of starvation. It is an undoubted success, and the author, who has devoted years of study to the subject, guarantees a noticeable reduction within twenty-four hours of commencing the treatment. This is different with other diseases, for the patient in some cases may go for weeks without being able to test whether the physician has rightly treated him, and may have derived no real or apparent improvement in health. Here, we repeat, the author guarantees it in twenty-four hours, the scale to be the unerring recorder. The treatment aims at the actual root of obesity, so that the superfluous fat does not return when discontinuing the treatment. It is perfectly harmless. We advise our readers to call the attention of stout friends to this, because, sincerely, we think they ought to know. For their information we may say that on sending two penny stamps, a book entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), containing a reprint of press notices from some hundreds of medical and other journals (British and Foreign) and other interesting particulars, including the "recipe," can be had, post free, from a Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn house, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—*Belfast News Letter*.

CORPULENCY THE THIEF OF TIME.

That procrastination is the Thief of Time is a truism so obvious that it has no claim to be regarded as an epigram. To more practical purpose it may be urged that Corpulency is, in very many respects, the parent of procrastination. The putting off till to-morrow what can be done to-day certainly becomes a mental habit, but it is unquestionably very frequently begotten by physical conditions which render exertion irksome. That, in the majority of cases, procrastination is easily curable, is one of the considerations suggested by a perusal of Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency, and the Cure," whose remarkable popularity is evidenced by the recent issue of the 18th edition. The enormous mass of correspondence which this expert has accumulated, and many extracts from which are included in the 256 pages of this little book, forms the most valuable addition which has yet been made to the literature of obesity. It is specially notable that a very large proportion of Mr. Russell's correspondents who have undergone his course of treatment for the reduction of obesity, emphasise the renewed vigour which they have experienced after passing through the process—a wonderfully rapid one, according to this method—of banishing the superabundant fat. The universal adoption of Mr. Russell's system by corpulent persons of both sexes would increase, by a stupendous percentage, the working capacity of mankind. The rapidly growing popularity of the treatment is due, doubtless, to the author having discarded all the obsolete notions about semi-starvation being

requisite to insure comely and comfortable slimness. It is certain that the more the marvellous possibilities of Mr. Russell's system become known, the less will be the tolerance for the laziness of people who decline to reduce their overweight by the pleasant and facile means which are described in this little book, which can be had, post free, by forwarding two penny stamps to Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—*Liverpool Daily Mercury*.

WASTE ACCUMULATIONS OF FAT.

What is described as an important medical discovery was recently made by F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Bedford Square, London, who has given long and intelligent study to the origin of the disease of corpulency. Mr. Russell has discovered—or rather invented—a medicine for the reduction of fat, which, from a long list of testimonials now before me, appears to be attended with the most remarkable curative results. His remedy differs in essential particulars from the Newmarket, Dusseldorf, and other well-known thinning systems. Its effect is not merely to reduce the amount of superfluous fat, but, by affecting the source of obesity, to induce a radical cure of the disease. Moreover, it entails no unpleasant restriction in diet, no exhausting "constitutionals," and no sudorifics and high temperature vapour baths. Here is a man who practically meets you with a handful of simple British herbs, and has performed the very extraordinary task of removing 14lb. of waste accumulation in seven days. It is merely a vegetable medicine, agreeable to the taste, and possessing such valuable tonic and invigorating qualities, that its use is often continued by the patient when the prime necessity for its administration is past. Mr. Russell makes no secret of its composition. His book is only two stamps—cheap enough indeed—send for it.—*Leeds Times*, January 9th, 1897.

CURIOUS EFFECTS IN THE TREATMENT OF CORPULENCY.

The old-fashioned methods of curing obesity were based upon the adoption of a sort of starvation dietary. Would any reader now believe that by the new orthodox treatment a stout patient can take almost double his usual quantity of food, and yet decrease one or two pounds of fat daily for a time? This is very singular, and directly hostile to previous opinions held by medical authorities, yet it is a fact. The author of the comparatively new system in question explains that the person under treatment is restored to a healthier state in the small space of 24 hours, having lost probably two pounds of superfluous deposit, the organs display great activity, and more food is required. By standing on a weighing-machine the proof of reduction is incontrovertibly shown daily. In serious cases, a pound to ten pounds weekly loss is registered until the person approaches his or her normal weight; then the diminution becomes less pronounced, the muscles firmer, the cure is effected. Compiled reprints of medical and other journals, and interesting particulars, including the book entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), containing the "recipe," which is quite harmless, can be obtained, post free, from Mr. Russell, of Woburn House, 27, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by inclosing two penny stamps.—*Dublin Weekly Freeman*.

wheeling and screaming far away. Oh, it was a grand hour for me! The frenzy mounted to my brain. I felt like a destroying angel. I took her miserable girl's heart in my hands and rent it in twain and cast its miserable pretences to the earth. I showed her myself, my manhood, my ardour, my passion, my devotion. I terrified her, awed her, fascinated her. For a time I think I had almost won upon her to yield.

"But my power forsook me. No sooner did I see the first symptom of returning tenderness in her, or what I mistook for it, than my hatred and rage departed; I was melted in a moment; I flung myself in front of her on my face, and implored her with sobs and tears to give me one little spark of love. Fool that I was! Fool! Fool!

"She took advantage of my weakness. Doubtless she despised me for it. She made me one of those mincing, lying answers that women know how to make to us in our madness, and she took courage at last to rise and leave me lying there—lying there with my face upon the wet sand, and the wet rain beating down upon my head, and the moaning tempest rising over me in the heavens, like the awful eruption of maniacal hatred that was working its way into my being within.

"I got up at night and came away. I suppose I still looked and acted as if I were sane. At all events, the people I passed said nothing to me. I packed up and left for Abertaff that night.

"With me I took an object which I had picked up on the sands where Eleanor had sat. It was the key of the house where she lived. When I caught sight of it it seemed like an inspiration. In an instant I resolved to make use of it to execute my vengeance. Since I could not marry Eleanor, I would kill her.

"But in the train a more subtle scheme presented itself. If I killed her she would be lost to me for ever, and I still longed for her as madly as at any time. The new idea which I had got was this. I would kill, not Eleanor, but her friend and benefactress, and I would do it in such a way as to cast the stain of guilt on Eleanor herself. You see the plot. Her life was to be in no real danger. The body was to disappear, and hence she was to escape a trial. But the horror and condemnation of the whole world were to be turned upon her, and then, in her hour of blackest misery, I was to come forward and say: 'I love you still. I believe in your innocence. Come with me to a foreign land as my wife, and I will make you happy.'

"I need not tell you much more. I came back by road for greater secrecy, and did not arrive in Porthstone till eleven at night. I was not tired. Some superhuman power had taken possession of me, and in all I did I felt as if I were but a passive instrument in its hands.

"I approached the house at twelve, expecting all its inmates to be asleep. Just as I was about to enter it the door opened, and to my astonishment Eleanor herself emerged. I gazed at her retreating figure with a sort of stupid fascination for some time, and then recovered myself, and went in. I had taken off my boots outside, and hence, I suppose my footsteps sounded light as I went upstairs.

"Well, do you want more? Do you care to hear how I killed her; how I stabbed her in her sleep, lowered her through the window, and came down with the jewel chest in my arms? I had to mutilate the corpse; the weight would have been too great for me at once. As it was, I made three journeys before I had disposed of all, and thrown everything, including the latchkey, into the sea.

"Then I walked back to Abertaff—twenty miles it was, and I got there before ten the next morning. I had breakfast, and was still walking the streets when the news came that the murder was discovered.

"It overwhelmed me. I assure you, Charles Prescott, on the oath of a dying man, that I knew not what I did till that moment. I was possessed as surely as any of the Galilean sufferers of old. Madness, your modern science calls it. It is all the same. I passed out of it into my

ordinary state with a terrible shock, and then I set about playing the part I had looked forward to, of delivering Eleanor, and carrying her off.

"But it was not to be. I had forgotten that she was not mad, too; I had made no allowance for her, and now I found that my protection, my confidence, was of no value to her, when she had lost the good opinion of the world.

"Of the world, do I say? Verily, I believe it was you; I believe you unconsciously thwarted me then, as before.

"I gave way to my frenzy again in secret. Again the demon came back and resumed his sway. He has held me ever since. He holds me now.

"Yet I can act my part. I deceive all. I just rang for my clerk, and told him I should want him to carry this to your chambers. Fool! He had no suspicion that he was never going to hear me speak again.

"Good-bye. 'Twere folly to ask you to forgive. I do not wish it. Yet, Eleanor—Eleanor——"

The letter ended abruptly at this point. The reader put on his hat and rushed round to Tressamer's chambers. It was too late. He found him sitting in a chair, stark and dead, with a dagger driven through his heart.

* * * * *

When a year had elapsed, a quiet wedding took place, in an out-of-the-way city church, between Charles Prescott and Eleanor Owen. The only dowry brought by the bride was her restored beauty, and a parchment under the Great Seal of England, pardoning her from all accusations that had been or might be raised against her on account of the tragedy which had so nearly involved her in a felon's doom.

THE END.

WHICH IS THE MADDEST PART OF THE KINGDOM?

THE reply is given in an interesting article by MR. J. HOLT SCHOOLING which appears in **PEARSON'S MAGAZINE** for February. Now on Sale. Price 6d.

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As announced in the Christmas Number of *Short Stories*, the Scrap-books forwarded in connection with the Christmas Competition, No. 6, have been sent to a charitable institution. Below is given the letter of acknowledgment from Mr. John Kirk, Secretary of the Ragged School Union, to whom the volumes were sent:

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